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**Mubarak,
portrait of the
week by
George
Bahgory....p.10**



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Press victory
HUNDREDS of journalists yesterday celebrated their victory in the year-old struggle to repeal the ill-reputed press law, known as Law 93, at an Extraordinary General Assembly at the Press Syndicate, reports Mana El-Nahas. Law 93 stiffened penalties for publication offences and threatened freedom of the press.

Chairman of the Press Syndicate Ibrahim Nafie and members of the Assembly expressed thanks to President Hosni Mubarak for his last minute intervention in support of journalists by issuing a presidential decree cancelling the disputed law.

"Our victory came as an eloquent answer to those who attempted to undermine the leading role of the press," Nafie told the Assembly. "The victory we gained is a victory for the values of freedom, justice and democracy."

Journalists renewed their confidence in Nafie and the syndicate's council by rejecting their collective resignations, presented last week when it seemed as if their battle to secure a compromise with the government over a new press law was lost. Journalists also approved a Code of Ethics to govern the profession, with penalties for those who violate professional values.

(see p. 2)

First contact

US SECRETARY OF State Warren Christopher will visit Egypt and Israel next Tuesday and Wednesday. In Cairo he will discuss with President Hosni Mubarak the results of the Arab summit and the peace process after the announcement of the policies of the new Israeli government.

The trip will also produce the first direct contact between a US official and new Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who is expected to visit Washington early in July.

The US State Department spokesman said on Tuesday that Christopher would make a longer Middle East tour, which would include Syria, later in the year, possibly in July. The spokesman dodged questions about the apparent contradictions between the announced US policy on Israeli settlements and Netanyahu's vows to continue building them in the West Bank and Syria's Golan Heights.

Soap bombs

Bahraini authorities defused a total of 13 home-made bombs found hidden in packets of soap and placed in supermarkets and shops, official sources said on Tuesday. Bahrain has been hit by a wave of unrest since December 1994 and has accused Iran of working to topple the government by financing a militia Shi'ite group called Hezbollah-Bahrain.

Meanwhile, the State Security Court sentenced eight Bahrainis to between three and 15 years in prison for murdering a policeman. Five others were jailed for sabotage, including torching and damaging school offices south of the capital Manama.

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Photo: Rami Shalhout

Scaling the summit

FRESHLY painted kerbs striped black and white. Revamped planting schemes along the medians of Salah Salem. Neatly mown grass, newly planted flowers. Cairo is a city in preparation for a summit. Almost everything is being spruced up.

On Saturday morning, at 11 am, the leaders of more than 20 Arab states will descend on the Mycerinos Hall of the International Conference Centre in Madinet Nasr, participants in the first full-scale Arab summit to be convened since the Gulf War. The summit's inaugural speech will be delivered by President Mubarak in his capacity as head of state of the host country.

The logo for the summit, adapted from that used by the Arab League, is a single olive branch, chosen as a reflection of the aspirations that have inspired the meeting. Discussions will take place, and decisions made, around a vast oval table constructed from some 20 individual pieces. The specially commissioned mobile "round table", designed by Hossam Mustafa, has no head and therefore eliminates potentially thorny questions of protocol while at the same time symbolising the spirit of unity and solidarity that it is hoped will characterise the summit and its proceedings.

A final flurry of activity as last minute preparations continue apace and any potential hitches are carefully ironed out before they have a chance to develop into problems. The logistics and security considerations involved in hosting such an event and ensuring the safety of the various delegations are mind-boggling. The summit's organisers, however, together with the newly outifted staff at the International Conference Centre, appear undaunted. They remain confident that everything will run smoothly, not least, according to Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi, Cairo's day to day traffic.

Towards a common agenda

Arab leaders meeting in Cairo for the first time in six years will attempt to revive Arab solidarity. Nevine Khalil reviews their agendas

The long-awaited Arab summit will open in Cairo on Sunday. Twenty presidents, monarchs and top officials will gather for what is hoped to be the turning of a new page in inter-Arab relations, marred over the past six years by deep splits and differences.

Although the summit was announced shortly after the narrow victory of the right-wing Binyamin Netanyahu in the Israeli elections, President Hosni Mubarak has repeatedly affirmed that the summit was not called in reaction to the new government, but rather as a step to meet a long-standing need for Arab coordination.

Iraq, whose invasion of Kuwait in 1990 led to sharp deterioration in inter-Arab relations, was not invited to the summit. But sources close to the meeting said that the issue of re-integrating Iraq will be on the summit agenda.

Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo tomorrow morning are expected to finalise a proposed statement to be issued by Arab leaders after their two-day meeting.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa told reporters that contacts have been underway with different Arab governments to reach a consensus on the summit agenda, which is expected to concentrate on two major points: Arab reconciliation and reaching a common stand on the future of peace negotiations with Israel.

According to Arab sources, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon will seek an Arab strategy to pressure Israel into complying with the land-for-peace formula.

The Palestinians want a clear stand by Arab leaders on

Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood, and it was reported that Arafat will ask the gathered leaders to issue a statement announcing their recognition of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Arafat clearly needs such support, especially after the announcement by Netanyahu in his policy guidelines, presented to the Israeli parliament on Tuesday, that he will not accept an independent Palestinian state, the division of Jerusalem or withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Meanwhile, Syria is reportedly coming to the summit with the strongest proposals in terms of future relations between the Arabs and Israel. Damascus will ask Arab leaders to reinstate the economic boycott of Israel and freeze the normalisation process. Syria will also seek Arab support against Turkey. Relations between the two countries have soured following a military pact between Turkey and Israel and conflict over use of water from the Euphrates River. Before the summit, Ankara warned Arab countries against backing Syria's stance on the sensitive water issue.

According to Syrian sources, Damascus will also put in a good word for Iran during the summit. Such a stand by Syria is likely to upset the Arab Gulf countries who consider Tehran as a major threat to security in the oil-rich region.

Besides Iran's occupation of three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, the latest announcement by Bahrain that it has foiled an Iranian plot to overthrow its government has added salt to the wounds.

As for Lebanon, whose negotiations with Israel are strongly linked to developments on the Syrian track, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi is expected to call upon Arab leaders to emphasize the demand for Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. Lebanon believes that if the Arabs come out with a united stand on Israel, Tel Aviv will think twice before attacking its southern territories.

Egypt's agenda is broad and non-specific. President Hosni Mubarak said that the summit aims "to support the peace process with a clear Arab vision which safeguards the Arabs' legitimate rights." It also includes Arab reconciliation and cooperation, relations with non-Arab neighbours like Iran and Turkey, as well as with various regional and international blocs.

Jordan appeared to have no set agenda of its own, with the Jordanian Prime Minister Abdel-Karim Al-Kabriti declaring that Amman looks forward to the summit as a means of establishing a common Arab stand based on mutual trust and a joint strategy. Kabriti denied reports that Jordan wanted to place the issue of terrorism on the summit's agenda.

According to observers, holding the summit after six years of division is in itself quite an accomplishment. However for real progress to be achieved, Arab leaders will have to prove that the summit is not just for show. At this critical juncture many analysts agree, Arab unity is more necessary than ever, because, as UAE President Sheikh Zayed Al-Nahyan put it, "the absence of an effective Arab stand is undoubtedly the reason behind the loss of Arab rights."

Iraq's absence at this summit has been criticised by some Arab states like Morocco, which said that a united Arab stand cannot be reached without all countries being present. It is yet unclear whether Morocco will be represented by its head of state, King Hassan II.

There may be last minute efforts, however, to guarantee the highest possible level of representation at the summit. It was reported that an unannounced meeting had taken place in Cairo between the foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia — the three states initiating the summit — to convince more Arab leaders to attend the meeting. Asked by *Al-Ahram Weekly*, the Egyptian Foreign Minister would not confirm or deny reports of a two-hour meeting. However, sources told AFP that the three ministers had looked at "ways to remedy the absence of several Arab leaders, so that the decisions taken at the meeting will carry greater weight".

The Arab leaders will gather in the Mycerinos Hall at the Cairo International Conference Centre on Saturday, where President Mubarak will give an opening address at around midday. "In the summit's final statement, we want to announce to the world that we are preparing our countries for a new period marked by the end of disunity and the beginning of united Arab ranks," Mubarak said earlier in the week. It is also expected that a mechanism will be instated to follow up Arab action.

The soul of Sharon

Netanyahu's government was cobbled together this week. It augurs ill for the peace process, writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

After a swearing-in ceremony replete with high drama — or high force — on 18 June, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu presented his new government to the 14th Knesset, where it was endorsed by 62 votes to 50.

Taken with the government's policy guidelines published one day before, the new Israeli administration suggests a shift to the right in Israeli domestic policy and, essentially, a revisionist stance to the terms of the Oslo peace accords.

Matters are likely to be made worse by the fractious nature of Israel's new six-party coalition, a fact made visible by Netanyahu's failure to form a government by the time of the Knesset's opening last Tuesday. Netanyahu is currently not only Israel's prime minister; he is also minister of housing and religious affairs. This massing of offices is less out of ambition than what has become dubbed in Israel's political circles as the "Sharon problem".

For all his hawkish views — and also because of them — Ariel Sharon is by far the most popular politician in the new Israeli government, commanding support from the ranks of the main Sephardic and religious parties as well as from the grassroots of his own Likud Party. On 17 June, Sharon was told that he would be housing minister. He accepted only to find out that Netanyahu had made a prior deal to split the portfolio between himself and a deputy minister from the orthodox United Torah Judaism bloc. Sharon left Jerusalem in a huff, while Netanyahu decided to freeze his truculent member of the Knesset out of

the government. It didn't work. Just prior to the announcement of the government on 18 June, Netanyahu's slated foreign minister, David Levy, declared that he would not serve in a cabinet without Sharon. Yet, by nightfall, Levy had been sworn in as foreign minister. This, say sources, was on condition that Sharon would have a post in the cabinet via the creation of a new ministry, National Infrastructure. This would put Sharon at the helm of all energy resources, water and electricity systems, and airport and port construction in Israel. Much more ominously for the Palestinians, it would also give him a free hand over roads, including the construction of settler bypass highways in the West Bank and Gaza. Sharon has yet to accept but, say sources, he is "considering the offer".

The appointment of Sharon to head such a strategic ministry would hardly be good news for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). But the real fear has been fanned by the coalition's policy guidelines which, if implemented, would bury the peace process on both its Palestinian and Syrian tracks.

While in his opening Knesset address, Netanyahu said that Israel would seek negotiations with Syria and Lebanon "without preconditions", the guidelines flatly contradict this. They state that "Israel will retain sovereignty over the Golan Heights" as "the basis for an arrangement with Syria".

On the Palestinian question, the guidelines, if anything, are even more hardline.

They express opposition to a Palestinian state as well as to the return of Palestinian refugees to the Occupied Territories for fear of the threat this would pose to Israel's "demographic security". Jerusalem will not only stay under Israel's "exclusive sovereignty"; actions will be taken to "enhance the social and economic status of the greater Jerusalem area". There is no mention of either the Oslo accords or UN resolutions 242 and 338 — supposedly the bases of the final-status negotiations — nor, tellingly, of settlements, although in his Knesset speech Netanyahu pledged to "encourage settlement" throughout "Israel, Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank, and Gaza]".

As for the PNA, Netanyahu promised "good neighbourly relations and cooperation" in return for the PNA preserving its "undertakings on security". The only glimmer of hope was a statement by new Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani that in his opinion Netanyahu "should" and "would" order the Israeli army's partial redeployment in Hebron.

As Arafat heads for the Arab summit in Cairo on 22-23 June, he will push for Arab solidarity and call on the assembled leaders to "recognise" a Palestinian state "with Jerusalem as its capital". But he must also be pondering the wisdom of gambling all on the Oslo formula. Thus far it has brought neither statehood nor Jerusalem, but an Israeli government whose head may be on the shoulders of Binyamin Netanyahu but whose soul is driven by the colonial ambitions of Ariel Sharon.

Netanyahu's declaration of war

AS BINYAMIN Netanyahu began his first day in office, Arab countries warned that the uncompromising line of the new Israeli government would imperil the peace process.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa was uncharacteristically vitriolic in his reaction and said on Tuesday that Netanyahu's stance would have a negative effect on the peace process. "The statement," he said, "raised more questions than answers and included too many 'nos': No to the Palestinian state, no to withdrawal from the Syrian heights and no to negotiations over the status of Jerusalem."

Syria rejected Israel's call for unconditional negotiations, and the Syrian government newspaper *Tishrin* said talks would not resume as long as Netanyahu refused the land-for-peace formula. Syrian diplomats called on Arab countries to halt all moves towards normalisation and tighten their economic boycott of Israel.

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Outcry over Zaqqaziq precedent

A dispute over supervision of a PhD thesis in a provincial university may be opening the door for discrimination against women in academia. Dina Ezzat reports

A battle between a male graduate student and a professor in the chemistry department at the University of Zaqqaziq — in the Nile Delta city of Zaqqaziq, may be a time bomb waiting to explode in the careers of hundreds of women academics.

The problem began with an official request submitted by PhD student Mohamed Sherif to his department, demanding that the committee supervising his research and viva "should contain no female element".

A recent court ruling allowed Sherif to begin his research under the supervision of the head of the Chemistry Department, a man, while the State Deputies Commission — a consulting body attached to the Supreme Constitutional Court — reaches a decision on the matter.

The verdict, the court said, had been made out of concern for the student's academic interest. It could be years before the State Deputies' decision is handed down. University rules allow a maximum of five years for a PhD student, who is also a staff member, to complete his research and write his thesis.

"Rejecting our supervision because we are women is completely unacceptable," said Somayah El-Sheikh, one of two women professors who were supposed to co-supervise the proposed thesis, along with another male colleague. "It was not only an insult for us as professors, who should be treated with respect by our junior staff and students, but also as women because it undermined our professional rights [to be treated equally]."

"This request has set a devastating precedent," argued El-Sheikh. "How can I know that tomorrow I won't enter my class to find my male students protesting against being lectured by a woman, or refusing to have women students with them in the same classroom?"

The other woman professor involved was not available for comment.

The request was passed from the head of the Chemistry Department to the dean and the board of the Faculty of Science, and the rector of the university. However it was only the dean-supervised faculty board that approved it. The rector's reverse of the faculty's decision was frozen by the court verdict that temporarily granted the student his wish.

"This discrimination... stands in direct contradiction with the law and constitution, as well as human rights conventions to which Egypt is signatory," criticised an appeal for action put out by a group of women's and human rights organisations.

The groups appealed to all concerned organisations and activists "to join forces against what is a clear act of gender discrimination, as yet unprecedented in the history of Egyptian universities".

But according to Ahmed Bassiouni, the dean of the Faculty at the centre of press attention in the two-month dispute, "There is no intention of anti-women discrimination whatever". The decision to remove the two women professors from the committee that was to supervise Sherif's PhD, he added, "was based on the fact that the student had serious problems with these two professors and we thought it better for everyone if they didn't have to work together".

Sherif alleges that while supervising his MA, El-Sheikh had abused Sherif's family's good contacts and demanded "big favours".

"Then the demands became too much for us to meet and I decided I did not want to do my PhD with her or the other woman professor, who is a good friend of hers," Sherif said.

While admitting that his letter was worded in discriminatory tones, Sherif insisted: "It was not my intention to say 'no women' at all. That was just my way of referring to these two women professors without naming names". His reason for referring to the women indirectly, he said, was "out of fear that they would end up on the supervising committee, in which case I would not be in a favourable situation".

He added: "I swear I would not have minded any other woman professor." Nevertheless, the alternative names suggested by Sherif to supervise his thesis are exclusively male. "That was because these professors were the ones working in the area that I wanted to work on for my degree. It had nothing to do with them being men," countered Sherif.

El-Sheikh categorically rejects allegations of abuse of power on her side. She insists that Sherif was motivated by his "reactionary" ideas, and said she would do everything she could to reverse this decision. "I know this guy. I worked with him before and he has reactionary attitudes towards women," she said.

According to Hala Shukrallah, member of the New Women Research Centre, "Regardless of the fine details and the inter-departmental problems, this case sets a serious precedent because it offers a rule that could be used in other places of work. It is actually a shift in the norms of equality".

The Zaqqaziq University case has caused a public outcry. Responding to a widespread press coverage, Minister of Education Hussein Kamel Bahaaeddin declared that his ministry would not allow or tolerate discrimination against women.

Discrimination against women in the workplace and on the labour market is not limited to this incident. Many working women complain of marginalisation in favour of their male counterparts, and many companies, government-owned ones included, restrict the right of application for certain jobs to male contenders.

The constitution clearly stipulates full equality for all citizens regardless of their gender. Egypt is a signatory of a number of international treaties that reject all forms of discrimination against women. But, complain women's groups, they are often not properly enforced.

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President and Mrs. Mubarak and Prime Minister El-Ganzouri (centre) listen to El-Sherif's presentation

It was a week of victory celebrations for journalists. After a year-long struggle, and last-minute intervention by President Mubarak, the "infamous" Law 93 was scrapped and Egypt has a new press law. Mona El-Nahhas reports from the Press Syndicate, and Gamal Essam El-Din from parliament

Light at tunnel's end

President's Hosni Mubarak's intervention at the 11th hour last week resolved a year-long stand-off between journalists and the government over press freedoms. A Presidential decree issued last Thursday abolished Law 93 and paved the way for the drafting of a new press law.

The prime minister was responsive to most of the suggestions we made and demonstrated a desire to reach a solution", Nafie told journalists after the meeting.

The amendments were then forwarded to the People's Assembly and on Tuesday, the draft was finally enacted. Although journalists feel the law does not fulfill all their demands, they see it as a vast improvement.

Our main target was to repeal Law 93, and we managed to realise this goal. But, we still hope to reach a civilized draft which guarantees press freedom. This requires us to double our efforts", said Yehia Qalash, member of the syndicate's council.

This week's jubilation contrasted sharply with the previous week's atmosphere of despondency. The draft press law then under debate in the Shura Council and the Media and Culture Committee of the People's Assembly had ignored the journalists' demand for the abrogation of Law 93, which had introduced preventive detention of journalists investigating for publication offences, stiffened penalties for such offences, and made terms of imprisonment mandatory in most of its provisions.

Also on Sunday, Nafie and members of the Press Syndicate's Council met with Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and discussed the final form of the second draft for the new press law. El-Ganzouri agreed to introduce amendments to five articles of the draft.

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Also on Sunday, Nafie and members of the Press Syndicate's Council met with Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and discussed the final form of the second draft for the new press law. El-Ganzouri agreed to introduce amendments to five articles of the draft.

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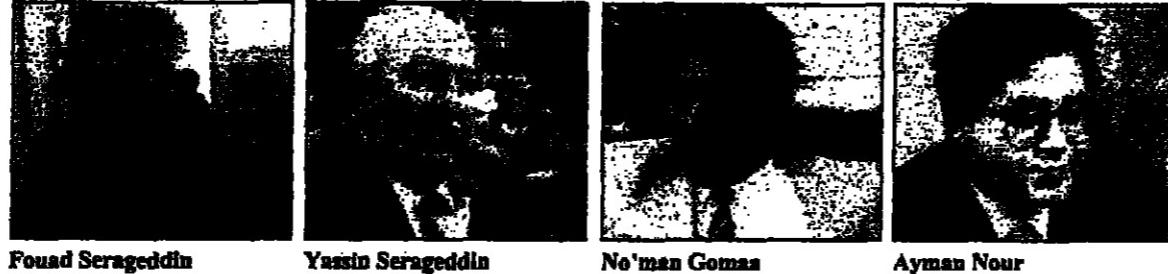
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Our main target

Succession feud leaves Wafd torn

A senior member of the Wafd Party has warned of an imminent split after last week's election for the Wafd's Supreme Authority. Omayma Abdel-Latif reports



Ending weeks of speculation about the party's future, and following newspaper reports of an open row between the party's chairman and his brother, the General Assembly of the liberal Wafd Party has elected a Wafdist Authority — the new title for the Supreme Authority — the party's highest body, responsible for major policy decisions. However, insiders maintain that the power struggle within the party is far from over.

The struggle centres over the succession to the party leadership. Party leader Fuad Serageddin is now over 80. His younger brother, Yassin, views himself as his natural successor, but he faces a challenge from deputy chairman No'man Gomaa, backed by a powerful bloc of supporters, known as the Paris Group.

The General Assembly was attended by 80 delegates from 25 governorates. Last Friday, the assembly elected 40 authority members from among 80 candidates. It also approved amendments to the party's internal statutes allowing party chairman Fuad Serageddin to select another 20 — instead of 10 — members of the Wafdist Authority.

Last week's assembly was dominated by fighting and dissent over appointments to leadership posts. Disagreement often developed into verbal battles, and conflict erupted into the open between supporters of Gomaa and Yassin Serageddin, with leaflets being distributed urging delegates to vote for the Paris Group. The Gomas

faction also obstructed Ahmed El-Khwaga, the head of the Bar Association and an opponent of Gomaa, in paying his membership dues to prevent him from nominating himself for membership of the Wafdist Authority. Adding to the future, some lawyers, including party member Adly El-Mouled, are taking legal action against the party, charging that the elections were rigged and that the results should be declared null and void.

According to observers, the Gomas camp succeeded in getting many of their members elected to the party's ruling body, gaining a tight grip over the party and placing Gomaa at the top of the list of candidates to succeed the ailing Serageddin.

Though Gomaa was not available for comment, a source close to him said the results have reinforced his position "and even made him a strong candidate for the

party's number one post."

A top party member described the results as "disappointing, especially to the young groups in the party."

"The results will allow the few ageing faces who have been controlling the party since its inception to tighten their hold on the party's affairs and its top posts," commented the source, who asked that his name be withheld.

Ayman Nour, leader of a group of anti-Gomaa Wafdist, said the elections showed that Gomaa had succeeded in ousting Yassin Serageddin and his supporters from the party's top positions.

Nour warned of the imminent emergence of a breakaway movement under his leadership "who cannot operate under the false democracy of Gomaa", and added that there would be further rifts within the mainstream party.

Nour said that Yassin Serageddin him-

self had declined to attend Friday's General Assembly in protest against the Paris Group's domination of party affairs.

But Fuad Serageddin, the party chairman, speaking to *Al-Ahram Weekly* two days after the election, denied reports of a "civil war" between the Wafdist leadership, particularly his younger brother Yassin and Gomaa. Rumours of a power struggle had persisted for years, he said, and had their origin in speculations about who would succeed him upon his death. There were, added the octogenarian Serageddin, "leaders and cadres within the Wafdist capable of continuing our march without exposing the party to division."

The post-Fuad Serageddin Wafdist will be strong and united," insisted Serageddin, who forecast that he might not live to chair the next General Assembly. However, in the midst of rumours of various rows between Fuad and Yassin Serageddin — because the chairman favours Gomaa over his younger brother — reports are also circulating within the Wafdist that Serageddin has been working to heal a rift between Yassin and Gomaa.

The younger Serageddin himself brushed aside reports of competition between him and Gomaa, and declined to comment on rumours that Gomaa had been named as his brother's successor.

"These are groundless rumours... The leadership will be decided at the next General Assembly," he told the *Weekly*. Yassin Serageddin refused to acknowledge that recent events were symptomatic of a power struggle. A plurality of views was natural and part and parcel of democracy, he said.

Saad Fakhry Abdel-Nour, one of the two newly-elected Coptic Wafdist Authority members, said that the election of two out of four Coptic candidates was a reasonable result.

He expects changes in the party with the emergence of new, younger figures. "The party will witness change because many of the younger groups are represented for the first time in the Wafdist leadership," he told the *Weekly*.

Another member predicted that major changes in the Wafdist's policies were unlikely. If Gomaa were to be elected chairman, the party would be likely to focus on "business deals", but its relationship with other political parties would remain unchanged.

Doctors Syndicate sues judicial committee

THE MUSLIM Brotherhood-dominated Doctors Syndicate is currently locked in battle with the judicial committee responsible for supervising syndicate elections, reports Mariz Tadros. The term of office of the syndicate's outgoing council expired on 13 April, and a date for new elections has yet to be set. The syndicate is accusing the committee of procrastination and is currently preparing an appeal to the Administrative Judicial Court. Some syndicate members charge the committee of delaying the elections to enable it to manipulate the results. The committee, meanwhile, argues that the syndicate has not fulfilled its legal obligations.

Omar Shahin, professor of psychiatry and deputy chairman of the syndicate told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the proposed appeal was an expression of the syndicate's dissatisfaction with the committee's behaviour. "It is also a way for us to pressure the committee to set a date once and for all for the elections, which are long overdue," he said.

Shahin maintained that the committee's argument that the syndicate has not fulfilled all its obligations under Law 100, which deals with syndicate administration, was unfounded. "We have presented the committee with an accurate voters' list. We have indicated all the changes to previous lists and have passed the information on to the committee," he stated. Shahin said that other requirements, some of which he described as petty, had also been met.

The syndicate has sent over 50 appeals to the committee's head, asking him to speed up the process of setting an election date. Shahin maintained that the delay was detrimental to the syndicate's well-being, because without an elected council it was unable to speak as the legitimate voice of its members. "We just want to hold our elections efficiently in the shortest possible time," he insisted.

However, a spokesman for the judicial committee insisted that the syndicate had failed to fulfil its legal obligations. "The judicial committee rules according to the prescribed laws and precepts as defined in Law 100, not according to any other means of assessment," emphasised the spokesman. He asserted that the voters' lists had not been updated since the last syndicate elections two years ago, and claimed that the syndicate itself had conceded that the lists were incomplete.

"We have asked the syndicate to form a special committee to come to court and verify their proposed voters lists with us just in case there are any discrepancies. This is what they should be doing now," he said.

Ful names, the spokesman added, were required to make it more difficult to tamper with the voting process. "If you only use two names it makes fraud very easy, because members can vote over and over again." He asserted that no date could be set for the election until voters' lists had been handed in and revised, even if the syndicate proceeded with its court action.

Constitution versus the law

A study in Egypt's legislative system by the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), a non-governmental organisation, concludes that dozens of laws are in violation of the constitution.

The report claims the Egyptian legislative structure has become corrupted, and calls for lending the Supreme Constitutional Court more powers to put an end to what the report describes as the phenomenon of unconstitutional laws. Officials at the legislative institutions, however, assert that the report exaggerates the problems, while accepting that mistakes do sometimes occur.

According to CHRLA statistics, the Supreme Constitutional Court has ruled a total of 60 laws unconstitutional. The constitutionality of many more laws is currently being contested before the court.

Rulings by the Supreme Constitutional Court, the report said, revealed that such unconstitutional laws violated nearly 25 per cent of the provisions of the 1971 constitution, as well as violating human rights and civil liberties. These include the right of every citizen to be tried before his "natural" judge, and the right to form societies and political parties.

The study blames the gap between the law and the constitution on those who took charge of the legislative authority since the issue of the 1971 constitution. "Legislators, during Sadat's era in particular, bear the responsibility for nearly 63 per cent of unconstitutional laws."

As the body responsible for ruling on the constitutionality of legislation, the study recommends reform to the Supreme Constitutional Court itself, and its position within the legal system.

Commenting on the report of a human rights group, the chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court asserted the court's independence, but admitted that litigants should have more direct access to the court. He spoke to Mona El-Nahas

The report calls for the removal of obstacles delaying the abolition of unconstitutional laws. "For example, individuals and bodies should be entitled to contest the constitutionality of laws before the court directly, without the intervention of the Court of Merits, and without waiting until the law in dispute is applied."

In addition, the report argues that the structure of the court leaves it without the necessary guarantees to ensure its complete impartiality. The executive authority, represented by the president of the republic, appoints the court's chief justice. Members of the court are appointed by means of a presidential decree after consulting the Supreme Council of Judicial Authorities.

However, Counsellor Awad El-Morr, chief justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court, maintained in comments made to *Al-Ahram Weekly* that in practice, the president did not intervene in appointments. "The chief justice of the court and its general assembly jointly take the decision concerning the court's future members," he explained. "Names of the nominees are ratified by the Supreme Council of Judicial Bodies before being referred to the president of the republic.

The president just signs Chief Justice El-Morr's decree of nomination without introducing any changes to the court's will."

"The court's chief justice," El-Morr argued, "should be appointed by the president," because he has executive responsibilities. He is empowered under the constitution to temporarily step in as president of the republic in the event of a vacancy, and the absence of the speaker of the People's Assembly. "Through appointing the court's chief justice, the president guarantees that in an emergency, the person taking control would be trustworthy and capable of carrying out the responsibility attached to his post properly."

El-Morr admitted, however, that there had been several attempts to diminish the role of the constitutional court, but asserted: "All these attempts have failed and they will never succeed."

El-Morr is in favour of allowing litigants to bypass the Court of Merits when seeking to challenge the constitutionality of a law. Such a move would, he believes, speed up the process of repealing unconstitutional laws. "However, it would overload the Constitutional Court, because the number of lawsuits would be doubled," he noted.

On the question of the effect of an overwhelming National Democratic (NDP) majority on the independence of legislators, Counsellor Mohammed Moussa, chairman of the People's Assembly's Legislative Committee denied that MPs were affected. "NDP deputies do not necessarily take the government's side... Our first concern is that a law is consistent with the constitution. Unconstitutional laws are a result of human error, and it is the Constitutional Court's responsibility to abolish them," he told the *Weekly*. According to Moussa, the number of unconstitutional laws mentioned in the report did not constitute a phenomenon when placed in the context of the hundreds of laws passed during this period.

"Members of the parliament, regardless of their political orientation, enjoy complete independence and immunity, which allows them to express their views freely," agreed Fawzya Abd-el-Sattar, former chairwoman of the People's Assembly's Legislative Committee. There were some rare cases, she conceded, of MPs who did not give priority to the public interest, "but this should not be taken as a general rule."

Draft laws, she added, were fully discussed in the People's Assembly's Legislative Committee before being debated by the whole house. "Some draft laws need to be passed quickly," she said. "In these cases particularly, legislators may make a mistake and pass something unconstitutional. This is quite natural. After all legislators are human beings."

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

Scholars generally cite December 1899 as the birth of the Egyptian labour movement. It was on this date that Egypt's cigarette rollers launched a successful strike that was only resolved two months later, in February 1900.

However, this dating is simplistic, if not inaccurate. The strike was preceded by a five-year campaign that has yet to receive its due share of academic research, and it was three years before the strike that Egypt's first labour federation was created. It was this federation that prepared the ground for the strike.

More importantly, studies on the inception of the Egyptian labour movement tend to lack an exploration of the passions that generally accompany such major historical events. It is precisely this vital portrayal of the human factor that *Al-Ahram* has so much to contribute to, in its detailed chronicles of the rise of the Egyptian labour movement.

The first stirrings of the Egyptian labour movement took place simultaneously in Port Said and Cairo. In Port Said the stirrings began, not with the cigarette rollers, but among the armies of workers employed by the Suez Canal Company. *Al-Ahram* records their first manifestations — the coal workers' and crane workers' strikes in 1894.

The crane workers' strike took place three months after the coal workers' strike. On 23 August, *Al-Ahram's* correspondent in Port Said reported, "The crane workers have gone on strike today and lodged their complaints against their employers with the governor. They are frequently forced to work on Sundays without extra pay. Nor do they receive compensation for those days when they are laid off because the sea is too stormy for them to work."

After reading the workers' complaints, the governor announced that he suspected that they were motivated by "rancour and malice" and advised them to report back to work. The following day, infuriated by the response, the workers "rushed to the wharves on which the cranes were mounted and tried to push them into the canal in an act of vengeance against the company." Their action brought in the military who "pushed the strikers until they were able to disperse them and drive them back to their quarters."

In Cairo, labour unrest began in the cigarette industry, one of Egypt's major local industries at the time. In Cairo alone, there were five cigarette manufacturing plants: Gianacis, Khalmis, Melakrino, Dimitri and Faviades. There were several companies in Alexandria too and as the names suggest, most, if not all, were owned by Greeks.

The cigarette industry should flourish in Egypt is due to a centuries-old custom of tobacco smoking. As Chabril

writes in the *Description d'Egypte*, "It is possible for us to say that the majority of the Egyptian people spend their time smoking. While the rich prefer tobacco from Lazizya, the poor smoke local tobacco which lacks the same exquisite flavour." Nor was cigarette smoking a product unique to the West; Egyptians simply substituted cigarettes for the *nargila* (water-pipe).

On 18 June 1894 the labour leaders of some 4,500 workers submitted a petition containing a lengthy list of complaints. Heading the list was a recent reduction in wages. "The individual worker used to receive between 10 and 12 francs a day and now it is no more than 15 piastres." Previously the employers had pledged not to reduce workers salaries to less than 25 piastres a day. "Nevertheless they broke this promise, in spite of the fact that sales have increased considerably over the last year."

Two days later a strike was declared. Fights broke out between the strikers and those who insisted on going to work. The police, brought in to quell the unrest, "arrested one of the strikers, whose enraged comrades rallied to his defence and attacked the police."

Employees in the cigarette factories were a mixture of Greeks, Syrians, Lebanese and Egyptians. Evidently, the leaders were Greeks, however, because *Al-Ahram* reports that one of the government's first reactions was to consult the Greek consul. It was agreed that "if the striking workers do not renounce their strike, their leaders will be expelled from Egypt." That the Greek consul should sanction this decision, even though Greeks enjoyed immunity under the capitulations system, can be attributed to the fact that the factory owners themselves were also Greeks.

In spite of the ultimatum, the strike continued for another month and a half, during which activity oscillated between skirmishes between scab workers and police and negotiations with employers. On 7 July the strikers rallied in front of the Malakrino factory and "entered into a brawl with the workers that the factory owners had brought in from Alexandria. They were dispersed by the police although they vowed that they would return."

Al-Ahram sharply criticised the use of force against the workers, "who generally constitute the weaker party that is aggrieved and most deserving of support". It then called upon the factory owners to "be more lenient with the cigarette rollers and to at least meet their minimum demands". Negotiations were initiated four days later when the governor of Cairo and the Greek consul interceded with the factory owners in order to convince them to raise the workers' wages from 22 to 26 piastres, a solution that was acceptable to

the workers. Shortly afterwards the workers of the Karyazi company submitted similar demands. Karyazi convinced one of the workers to write to a Greek-language newspaper published in Cairo attesting that the employees of the factory had no cause for grievance. The letter incited the wrath of his co-workers who "insisted he be dismissed and when the owner refused they walked out en masse and went on strike".

By the turn of the century the strike was in full swing. Over 1,500 workers refused to report to work, leading to the closure of Cairo's five major cigarette factories. The factory owners' mistrust of the union was one of the major factors behind the intensification of the strike. Indeed to counter the union, the cigarette magnates formed their own association, the Union of Egyptian Tobacco Factories. Selecting Nestor Gianacis as its president, it held its first meeting on 31 December 1898 to adopt a number of resolutions.

The union expressed its conviction that the Federation of Cigarette Rollers had departed from the humanitarian aims of its charter by not granting the worker the freedom to choose whether to work or not, and "making him a captive of the federation's central committee". It also stated that the labour federation had formed a monitoring committee which it accused of barring non-members from working in the factories.

The tract of the Union of Egyptian Tobacco Factories concluded, "We reserve for ourselves the complete liberty to employ any worker who agrees to our terms and to dismiss any worker who does not fulfil his obligations in accordance with the regulations of the company." The organisation then issued an ultimatum to Aliak Apostoli, the president of the United Federation of Cigarette Rollers: "If you do not call off the workers' strike in the factories of the Karyazi Brothers Co. within eight days of us of the date of this notification, we will be regretfully forced to close down operations in all our factories and to dismiss all workers who are members of the above mentioned federation."

When one factory owner, Melakrino, tried to bring in workers from Port Said, his ploy backfired. "Having found themselves locked inside the factory like prisoners, the workers smuggled a message to

the Federation of Cigarette Rollers saying that they were of the same conviction as their comrades but that they were being coerced to work. The Federation presented the letter to the governor who ordered the captive workers released."

It was not long before the solidarity of the owners began to erode. The first to signal a breaking of ranks was Metosian who suggested that they comply with some of the workers' demands. Faviades, on the other hand, advocated a stancher line. When workers staged a rally outside his factory, he called in the police to disperse them. Ten days later, the workers staged another protest rally outside of his factory. There was much dirt and consternation. Mansfield, the deputy police commissioner, arrived with a corps of police in order to disperse the demonstrators. The sight of the police caused the workers to become agitated and when Mansfield's assistant berated them, fighting broke out. In the ensuing mêlée, 15 people were arrested and taken into detention and the remainder dispersed.

It was not until two weeks later, on 21 February, that the parties reached a settlement. The most important provisions stipulated in the agreement, which was published in full in *Al-Ahram*, were "to set a minimum wage to permit workers to smoke on site, to allow them to choose the food and drink they desired, to exempt them from all compulsory payments and to dismiss those who accept or pay bribes". As for the factory owners, they had the right to "dismiss any worker who is absent for three consecutive days without leave or without a legitimate excuse, to dismiss workers who violate the codes of conduct, and to suspend workers for one day if they ruin the tobacco or if the cigarettes they roll are not up to standard". Finally, the agreement regulated the relationship between the merchants and the United Federation of Cigarette Rollers. Workers with seniority would have the right to employment before the company hired new workers and if a worker lodged a complaint, the federation would have the right to investigate. Last but not least, they exacted a pledge from Gianacis to "release all the workers who have been detained in prison".

The following day, 22 February, the cigarette workers returned to work, ending the two month-long strike that is generally taken to mark the birth of the Egyptian labour movement.

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

Jordan breaks ranks

Washington, with Jordan's help, is trying to impose the issue of terrorism on next week's Cairo Arab summit, writes Hoda Tawfik from Washington

The United States and Jordan, during discussions in Washington this week, made no secret of the fact that the announcement that Arab leaders are convening in a summit in Cairo came as a surprise to both of them.

According to the Jordanian minister of information, Jordan's King Hussein was surprised when the call for the summit emerged from the Damascus summit, attended by the leaders of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. It seems Jordan was expecting a mini-summit that would include Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Palestinians. After his meeting with King Hussein, US President Bill Clinton's message to the summit was that he hoped Arab leaders would reaffirm their commitment to the understanding reached at Sham El-Sheikh to confront terrorism in any country in the world.

Terrorism seemed out of context, as Syria and Lebanon were not part of the Sham El-Sheikh understanding referred to by Clinton. The American president's other message to the summit expressed hope that Arab leaders would not presume that pursuing peace was impossible with newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu until there was concrete evidence to the contrary.

Is Clinton's call to address terrorism an attempt to divert the summit away from its main purpose, *Al-Ahram Weekly* asked Jordanian Information Minister Marwan Muasher. The minister replied: "In order to achieve reconciliation, we have to have open and frank discussions on all issues and differences between us. Terrorism is one of the issues Jordan wants to raise."

Muasher stressed that Jordan wants to have a larger role in the peace process. "Jordan can play a prominent part in ending the Arab-Israeli conflict," he said. Muasher believes that Jordan has to feature significantly in any reassessment of Arab relations with the US following the rise of the Likud Party to power in Israel.

He cited one important reason for the new role Jordan is seeking. "In the wake of the recent Israeli elections, Jordan stands out as the country which has exercised sound judgement by remaining neutral. Today, Jordan alone enjoys the trust of all Israelis, including the new government," he said.

In Washington King Hussein stressed his astonishment at what he called "the negative and bleak reaction of some Arab countries towards the newly elected prime minister of Israel". Standing beside Clinton on the White House lawn, Hussein said, "Netanyahu was elected in a democratic process. We have every assurance he will build on every step agreed upon in the peace process."

The US, in spite of its concern about the future of the Middle East peace process under the hawkish coalition Netanyahu is leading, is stalled for time until the Clinton administration establishes a rapport with Israel's new leadership.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher confirmed that he will be making his first visit to Israel since Netanyahu's victory next week to meet with the prime minister-elect and his team.

Observers believe that Christopher hopes to reach out to the new leadership in Israel and make amends for Washington's past support of outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres. He stressed that the US would continue to remain focused on preserving the past three years' achievements along the road to peace. Christopher also promised to remain closely in touch with Arab leaders during the run-up to their summit.

Numerous diplomatic channels have been used by the Clinton administration to try to water down the tone of the forthcoming Arab summit. The Arab summit has alarmed the Jewish lobby in the US, who have expressed anger and shock which was reflected in a discussion on the Middle East held by the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives. Republican Senator Tom Lantos said that he found it "extremely disturbing" that Egypt had taken what he labelled as a hostile and negative view towards the US government by organising an Arab front against Israel.

In response, the Egyptian ambassador to Washington, Ahmed Maher El-Sayed, wrote in a letter to Lantos: "If you choose to support the elected government of Israel in all circumstances and in whatever it does, right or wrong, I would expect you not to challenge the right of others to take a different and more objective stand, particularly if their objective is to promote the cause of peace."

"We do not threaten anybody and do not accept threats from anybody. You know that the relationship between Egypt and the US is beneficial to both sides, and is based on equality and mutual respect," the Egyptian ambassador said in his letter.



A UN inspector stands by his car in Baghdad in front of an Iraqi military site. Rolf Ekeus, chairman of the UN Special Commission on disarming Iraq, arrived in Baghdad yesterday to urge Iraq to lift a ban preventing his inspectors from searching suspected weapons sites. A UN inspectors team was pulled out of Iraq on Sunday after Iraq refused them access to Republican Guard sites (photo:AFP)

No longer in a rush

Warnings against "heads-over-heels rushing" to normalise relations with Israel often went unheeded under Peres. This is unlikely to be the case with Netanyahu. Sayed Awad, on the eve of the Cairo summit, charts the region's normalisation map

The controversial issue of normalising relations with Israel may prove to be too delicate for discussion at the Cairo Arab Summit next week. However, a number of Arab states have declared their intention to freeze the normalisation process if Israel fails to abide by the principles of the Madrid conference.

Israeli diplomacy has successfully imposed economic normalisation as a prelude to political normalisation with the Arab states. But notwithstanding such all-region gatherings as the Casablanca and Amman economic summits, the process of bilateral normalisation has varied widely between Israel on the one hand and the various Arab countries on the other.

Due to pressures exerted by Western countries, mainly the United States and France, the tide of normalisation was directed on two main fronts: the Maghreb and the Arab Gulf.

At the first front, increasing political and economic interaction between Israel and the Maghreb states activated economic cooperation, particularly after the Casablanca economic summit.

Morocco ushered in a turning point in Arab-Israeli normalisation in 1994 with the opening of two offices for communications and interest protection in Tel Aviv and the Gaza Strip, and allowing Israel to set up a counterpart office in Rabat. The late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin welcomed this step which would pave the way for establishing full diplomatic relations between the two countries, adding that "it was only a matter of time".

Political contacts between Israel and Tunisia moved from secrecy to openness, and from unofficial meetings to formal bilateral relations in less than two years. In August 1994, Rabin sent a special envoy to Tunis to negotiate the possibility of setting up an office for the protection of Israeli interests in Tunisia as a first step towards full normalisation between the two states. In November, Tunisia extended an invitation to an Israeli delegation to participate in a seminar on the Mediterranean's environment.

By January of 1996, a tri-lateral agreement between the Tunisian, Israeli and American foreign ministers resulted in opening Tunisian and Israeli liaison offices for the protection of the interests of both countries. The Israeli office has begun operating, and has been moved near the centre of the Tunisian capital.

Tunisia emphasised that it would link raising the level of diplomatic representation to progress in peace negotiations. The January 1996 agreement came after Israeli redeployment in the West Bank and the Palestinian National Council elections. However, the actual implementation of the Tunisian-Israeli agreement coincided with Israel's onslaught on Lebanon last April.

Unofficial contacts were maintained between Israel and Mauritania in order to establish communication offices in both countries. Mauritania's normalisation steps were motivated by the fact that establishing relations with Israel and renouncing the former alliance with Iraq are the only available alternatives to improve its channels of cooperation with the US and Western countries.

In June 1995, Jordanian sources revealed that the Mauritanian foreign minister met with his Israeli counterpart in Amman, in the presence of the Jordanian foreign minister. This meeting took place only 18 days after the latter had met with Shimon Peres in Madrid.

However, under pressure from Libya, which threatened to cut all aid to Mauritania, it was compelled to put a halt on normalising relations with Israel, following its latest cabinet change which occurred shortly after the Sham El-Sheikh Peacemakers Summit.

On its part, Algeria allowed its athletes and sports teams to play against Israeli contestants. Nevertheless, fears that this state of affairs might further intensify the Algerian crisis, in addition to public opinion's rejection of normalisation with Israel, especially on the part of Islamists, speeded up Algeria's change of heart. The Algerian foreign minister refused to meet his Israeli counterpart on the fringes of the Barcelona Euro-Med conference last November.

In 1993, Libya considered indirectly jumping onto the normalisation bandwagon. Its decision to send Libyan pilgrims to visit holy sites in Jerusalem was not without political motives. The move aimed at softening the US's stand with respect to Libya resulting from the Lockerbie incident. However, American intransigence took the wind out of Libya's sails.

Israel adopted a step-by-step normalisation strategy with the Gulf countries, with the help of the US during the time of the Gulf War. This strategy included attempts to mitigate the Arab boycott against Israel. The 1993 Oslo Accord between the PLO and Israel provided an opportunity to further improve Gulf-Israel relations.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) announced in early July 1994 the end of the secondary boycott (imposed by the Arab League on foreign firms dealing with Israel) and the tertiary boycott (imposed on branches of companies dealing with Israel). Indications of positive developments on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks prompted a collective Arab decision to lift the direct boycott. Given that the end of the boycott had been a major American objective behind settlement efforts aimed at ending discrimination against US corporations dealing with Israel, both the US and Israel welcomed this decision.

Israeli chambers of commerce estimate that the Arab boycott has cost Israel more than \$40 billion since 1951, and was responsible for a 1-3 per cent decrease in yearly GNP. Israel believes that the weaker the Arab boycott, the greater its export potential with neighbouring countries, Israel's natural market. Other estimates indicate that the unpublicised size of trade between the Arabs and Israel currently exceeds \$1 billion per year.

Israel has capitalised on all available opportunities to promote mutual cooperation with Arab Gulf countries. The aim here was to "build trust" among the different parties along the lines of Is-

rael's concept of peace — one which advocates exchanging diplomatic relations, freedom of movement for individuals and goods, and cooperation agreements pertaining to economy, water, infrastructural projects and regional security.

There has been an increasing openness to Israel from some Gulf countries more than others. In the Sultanate of Oman, direct but secret contacts which had taken place 18 years ago were finally made public, through multilateral negotiations hosted by Muscat. Yossi Beilin, Israel's deputy foreign minister visited Oman in early 1994. This was his second visit to Oman after having led his country's delegation in meetings of the action group on water resources in April 1993.

In October 1994, the Israeli daily, *Ha'aretz*, reported the Omani minister of state for foreign affairs had announced that his country would soon establish a diplomatic mission in Israel. The report was denied by Muscat on the grounds that this would be realised only if tangible progress with Syria and Lebanon is made, or through a collective GCC resolution. The GCC secretary-general emphasised that normalising relations with Israel was linked to establishing a comprehensive peace in the region.

Last January, Oman and Israel announced that they had signed an agreement to set up offices for commercial representation to reinforce bilateral cooperation between the private sectors of both countries.

Similarly, Qatar has proceeded with fast-paced normalisation with Israel. Foreign ministers of both states have been overtly meeting since 1994, in UN corridors and London, to discuss bilateral cooperation, particularly the possibility of extending a pipeline to transport Qatari natural gas to Eilat, then to Europe. In the beginning of March, 1994, Qatar officially invited a delegation of 22 leaders of Jewish American organisations to visit the country.

Peres' official visit in April 1996 to both Oman and Qatar underlined the special position the two Gulf states occupied on the region's normalisation map. During the visit Israel and Qatar signed an agreement to exchange commercial representation offices. Shortly after this visit, Oman and Qatar were linked to Israel via a direct telephone network.

Significantly, this visit coincided with Israel's closure of the West Bank and Gaza. The closures caused serious damage to the Palestinian economy.

To bolster its image in the election campaign, Peres talked about increasing trade with Oman and Qatar. He wanted to show Israel that his dream of a "new Middle East" was materialising.

In a similar vein, Bahrain received an Israeli delegation headed by the minister of environment in 1994 to take part in multilateral negotiations on the environment. Israel was selective in choosing its delegation in order to benefit politically from the occasion. In the same year, Bahrain's foreign minister met with the Israeli minister of environment.

The process may well grind to a halt. The formation of Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government this week and the convening of the Cairo Arab Summit next Saturday seem to underline that, for the moment at least, the wind has gone out of normalisation's sails.

Ahead of the Arab summit, academics and diplomats outlined their own views on Bibi and peace. Sherine Bahaa listened in

Pieces of peace

Diplomats attending a seminar held in Cairo last week on the results of the Israeli elections agreed that there is now an atmosphere of apprehension prevailing in the Middle East. "It is not just Arabs against Israel, it is also Arabs against Arabs," said one diplomat.

The prospects for peace in light of Benjamin Netanyahu's victory was the topic of the seminar organised by the Egyptian Committee for Afro-Asian Solidarity. Diplomats and intellectuals alike expressed their hope that future Arab strategy will be consolidated at the upcoming Arab summit in Cairo to be held 21-23 June. The participants viewed President Mubarak's call for an Arab summit as a positive step and a genuine attempt to break the vicious circle of Arabs reacting to actions initiated by Israel, rather than themselves initiating action.

Though no invitation to the Arab summit was extended to the Iraqi government, due to tense relations with the Arab Gulf countries since the Gulf War, Iraqi Ambassador to Cairo Nabil Nejm received a warm welcome at the seminar. Nejm, however, preferred to keep a low profile, attending the seminar without participating in the debate.

According to Salah Bassiouni, former Egyptian ambassador to the USSR, the convening of an Arab summit in Cairo is the first step towards rescuing the peace process. "We have forgotten that the peace process is an indispensable part of the new order in the Middle East laid down after the Gulf War by former US President George Bush. I do not think that the US is ready to give up its role in this order."

Many commentators believe that Netanyahu's approach to the peace process is likely to follow the footsteps of the previous Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir, who followed a policy in Madrid of "not so much to settle as to stall". They argue that Netanyahu

intends to hold onto the pieces of peace he inherited.

Whether Netanyahu will stick to his predecessor's policy or not, Bassiouni argued that time factor is not necessarily solely to Israel's benefit. "Syria had played with the time factor until it killed Peres and converted time to be a pressure factor against Israel," Bassiouni said.

A prominent Palestinian participant said Netanyahu's victory came as no surprise to many Palestinians. According to the Palestinian source, who chose to remain anonymous, the Israeli society is primarily governed by the military. Outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres's efforts to bolster cooperation with the Palestinian National Authority did not go down well with military generals and the Israeli public.

The same source confirmed that Peres had presented a proposed document on the final status agreement to the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. The broad guidelines of this document proposed the establishment of a Palestinian state on 27.4 per cent of the territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

The document also discussed the redistribution of Jewish settlements in the autonomous areas, the establishment of a fund to be financed by the US to compensate those settlers who were forced to move. It was in this document that the classification of settlements into either political settlements or security ones was first introduced. The rehabilitation of refugees in autonomous areas was also addressed.

The source revealed that the Israelis have indicated they would hand over Azaria and Abu-Decco villages outside Jerusalem, to the Palestinians as their capital. A secure passage between these two villages was offered in the document, under joint Israeli-Palestinian administration. Arafat refused to discuss this issue based on the conviction that Jerusalem is an Arab and international cause," the Palestinian delegate said.

Dr Qadri Hefni, professor of psychology at Ain Shams University and a member of the Egyptian delegation to the Madrid conference, told participants that "Netanyahu did not win, rather it was the peace process that fragmented the Israeli society," he said, maintaining that as psychologists would say: "tension units, while peace helps to bring about differences."

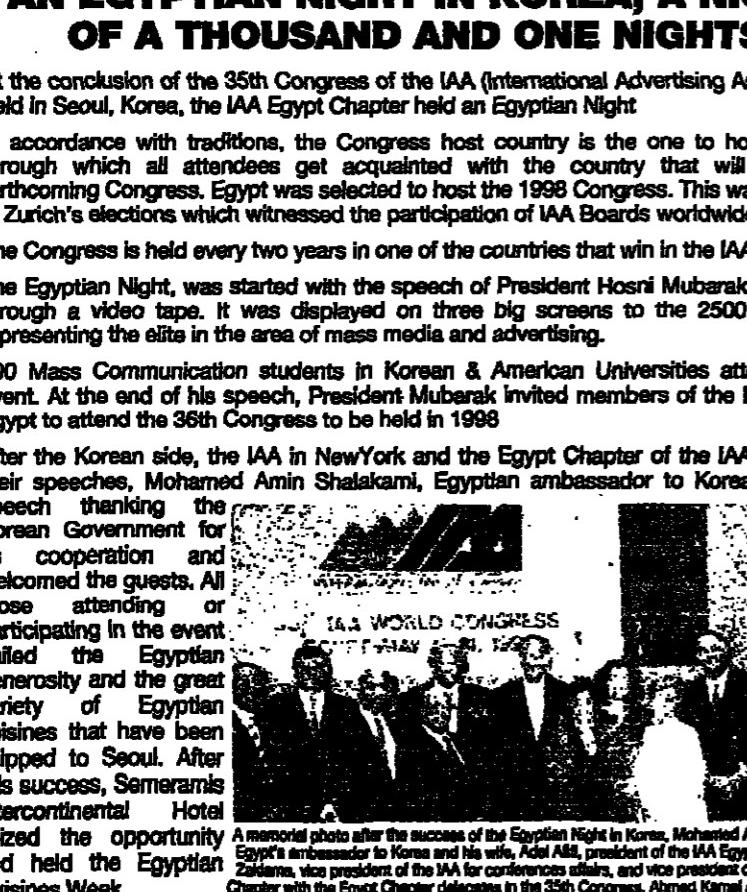
According to Hefni, the Israeli electorate did not choose between peace and war. "The electorate is more concerned with internal issues like security and refugees," he said. The Israeli society is not one united national bloc, explained Hefni: "Over the past three or four years, more than half of Jewish immigrants came from the former Soviet Union with a different culture from those who came from the West. Similarly, the Arab voters [have] emerged as a real political force since 1967."

Said El-Naggar, former vice-president of the World Bank and chairman of the New Civic Forum, attributed the success of the Israeli hawks to Arab weakness: "There is no real force that can stand up to the Israeli. Syria is the only force that is in a real confrontation with Israel, the rest of the Arabs have pursued normalization." El-Naggar believes that by choosing Netanyahu, Israelis want much more than what they are getting so far.

It is within this context that El-Naggar hailed the Damascus meeting and the coming summit "as a positive step". He wondered though whether the present Arab moves "are sustainable, especially if the Americans interfere through their various means." He argued that Arab states must find other alternatives besides summits, such as the Damascus formula where "Arab leaders can negotiate, reach conclusions and follow-up on their resolutions."



During the celebration Mohamed Amin Shalakani, Egypt's ambassador to Korea and Dr. Yang Hon, one of the prominent businessmen in Korea, Adel Afifi, president of the IAA Egypt Chapter, general manager, Advertising Dept. and member of the board of Al-Ahram Establishment



AN EGYPTIAN NIGHT IN KOREA; A NIGHT OF A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS
At the conclusion of the 35th Congress of the IAA (International Advertising Association) held in Seoul, Korea, the IAA Egypt Chapter held an Egyptian Night

In accordance with traditions, the Congress host country is the one to hold a party through which all attendees get acquainted with the country that will host the forthcoming Congress. Egypt was selected to host the 1998 Congress. This was decided in Zurich's elections which witnessed the participation of IAA Boards worldwide.

The Congress is held every two years in one of the countries that win in the IAA elections. The Egyptian Night, was started with the speech of President Hosni Mubarak, delivered through a video tape. It was displayed on three big screens to the 2500 members representing the elite in the area of mass media and advertising.

500 Mass Communication students in Korean & American Universities attended the event. At the end of his speech, President Mubarak invited members of the IAA to visit Egypt to attend the 36th Congress to be held in 1998.

After the Korean side, the IAA in New York and the Egypt Chapter of the IAA delivered their speeches, Mohamed Amin Shalakani, Egyptian ambassador to Korea gave his speech thanking the Korean Government for its cooperation and welcomed the guests. All those attending or participating in the event hailed the Egyptian generosity and the great variety of Egyptian cuisines that have been shipped to Seoul. After this success, Semeraris Intercontinental Hotel seized the opportunity to host the Egyptian Cuisines Week.

During the celebration Mohamed Amin Shalakani, Egypt's ambassador to Korea and his wife, Dr. Yang Hon, vice president of the IAA Egypt Chapter, and vice president of the IAA Egypt Chapter with the Egypt Chapter delegates in the 35th Congress, Ahmed Kamal Amin, Mohamed Yousef Habib, Mohamed Afifi, and Adel Afifi, General Manager, Advertising Dept. and member of the board of Al-Ahram Establishment

لقاء في مصر

'A basic human need'

"Our main concern is to reconstruct Israeli society," said Azmi Bishara, lecturer of philosophy at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank and leader of the National Democratic Assembly (Al-Tajammu). Established a year and a half ago, Al-Tajammu was officially declared a party one month before last May's Israeli elections.

Bishara said that Al-Tajammu decided to run in the elections in response to "a public demand for a genuine political movement that would reflect Arab concerns and the complexity of their situation in Israel."

He believes that the Arabs in Israel have to engage in Israeli reality. "This reality includes the Israeli parliament. In Israel, there is no way of articulating a political movement without forming a party, and you cannot form a party without going to parliament," he explained.

By articulating its nationalist political position in parliament, the party will have more access to the media, Bishara pointed out. It will also benefit from finances from parliament. "But the most important gain is greater parliamentary representation of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel," insisted Bishara.

Al-Tajammu ran on a joint list with Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality), the biggest component of which is the Communist Party, rather than with the United Arab List (UAL) and the Islamic movement. He explained that Al-Tajammu is closer to Hadash in its social and political programme. Bishara believes that the UAL's position lacks clarity: "They were more concerned with negotiating with Labour for a cabinet position for an Arab. You cannot join a government if you do not agree with it. I call

that political opportunism."

Bishara argues that one cannot ask the whole Arab population to be one party. "This is neither needed nor justifiable as Arabs have different ideological and political positions. Having two parties meant more Arab votes, and more Arab votes means greater representation in the Knesset. The results of the end indicated that the Arab votes were accumulated in two big blocs," he said.

Nevertheless, to avoid losing votes, Al-Tajammu signed an agreement of surplus votes with Darawisha, leader of the Arab Democratic Party. Under this agreement, which is allowed in the Israeli electoral system, two parties can agree where the surplus votes go. "Our joint list with Hadash won five seats, but we got more votes than that, so Darawisha got our surplus votes and this enabled its list to win a fourth seat," Bishara explained.

Bishara was the mind behind the "blank ballot" tactic during the Israeli elections. His main motivation was to direct a message at former Prime Minister Shimon Peres from Palestinian citizens. "We are not in his pocket. We wanted to put pressure on Peres. Labour has governed Israel since 1948. It is the state of Israel. With the exception of seven years of Likud rule, Labour is responsible for all the rest. So we have no problem saying no to Labour," said Bishara.

The decision was taken at the height of the Israeli onslaught on Lebanon in April. Bishara said that the Arabs in Israel were the only Arab force capable of taking to the streets to demonstrate against the aggression on Lebanon.

Two weeks before the elections Bishara stopped campaigning for blank votes. Although he attacked Labour, he asked the

Arab population to vote according to their conscience. In the end, 95 per cent of the Arabs who filled in their ballot papers voted for Peres and five per cent chose Benjamin Netanyahu.

There were only 10,000 Arab blank votes against 70,000 Jewish ones. In Tel Aviv alone, there were 12,000 blank votes. "Peres needed another 30,000 votes to win. And had the 10,000 Arab votes all gone to Peres his problem would not have been solved. But I am very happy that it has happened. Let the 10,000 blank votes be a kind of memento for us, for our collective memory. There is something morally decent about all Arabs voting for Peres," commented Bishara.

From Bishara's standpoint, the rise of the religious right was not the only discouraging sign. "We were discouraged by Labour and by Peres. We are discouraged because the people in Israel did not vote for the deformed peace process which favoured the Israelis. Even the apartheid system that was created by Peres was seen by many Jews as a concession," he said.

Bishara believes that the outcome of the Israeli elections showed the true face of Israel. There were two bairuts: one for the prime minister and the other for parliament. "The parliament vote was identity politics, but the vote for the prime minister was political. This split in the votes was a great mistake. It made people make compromises between different affiliations, which is the opposite of the act of voting in a democracy. Religious parties won at the expense of Labour and Likud," he added.

Elaborating on his party's motto "Israel, a country for all its citizens", Bishara said that the most important element in its programme is equality. He argued, "Equality

is more than individual rights. In a liberal democratic country, citizenship should be the criterion for rights. We propose citizenship as the criterion and not ethnic, national, cultural and religious affiliations. What kind of equality can we aspire to when Israel defines itself as a state of the Jews? We are not even recognised in Israel as Arabs, but as non-Jews. We want to be recognised as a national minority."

Al-Tajammu would like to see Arabs run their own affairs. Education and cultural affairs are a priority. "Until now Arab education in Israel has been run by Jews. We want to decide on our curriculum in Arab schools. We want an Arab television network, run by Arabs, instead of Jewish television in Arabic," Bishara said.

But how realistic is the objective of stopping the Israelisation of the Palestinian population? Bishara charged that what is realistic about his party's programme is that it gives Arabs a tool to deal with reality and Zionism. "We have programmes and demands, not slogans. For example, if a state already exists, why do we need a Jewish Agency and a Jewish National Fund or a law of return for any Jew who wants to return when Jews are no longer oppressed anywhere in the world?" he asked.

Bishara argues: "Israelisation is the negation of Palestinian identity, because it means being subjugated to the projects of others, who in this case are the aggressors, the colonialists. In an extreme case, it is highlighted by the plight of a Palestinian serving in the Israeli army in the Occupied Territories. He is part of the Israeli army, though the Israeli state is not his state. The state will accept him only

Azmi Bishara, one of 11 Arab members of the Knesset, talks to Samia Nkrumah in Cairo about the need for Palestinian citizens of Israel to articulate a distinct national identity if they are to be recognised as a national minority

as someone who gives it a service. So long as Israel is exclusively the state of the Jews it cannot be that of the Palestinians. The process of Israelisation will cease only if we can achieve the recognition of two identities, two nationalities within the state."

As for the more controversial concept of cultural autonomy which appears on the party's platform, Bishara said that he does not regard it as an alternative for equality. "If you suggest cultural autonomy without dealing with the question of equality first, it may allow the government to avoid giving Arabs equality. We reject a scenario where you have a Jewish state and the Arabs have their autonomy within it," he said.

The concept of cultural autonomy was an ideological platform. Bishara developed eight years ago. "It was in response to a question of how to deal with Zionism after the defeat of the Arab nation and the demise of the Arab national movement. We reject Zionism, morally and ideologically," he added.

There were mixed reactions among Arabs and Jews to Bishara's campaign. The campaign was very much at the centre of public debate, which prompted some ministers to attribute Netanyahu's victory to its emergence. Among Arabs, it was welcomed with caution and fear. Some feared they would lose what they had. "I explained that our programme was not extremist, but a liberal democratic one," said Bishara. "I am concerned with value politics which combines humanist values and rationalism."

Bishara said that cultural autonomy is only acceptable to people if you do not use the word "autonomy" because the word has been perverted due to its association with the West Bank and Gaza. "But if you say recognising our national identity, that is acceptable because people are suffering from a severe identity crisis," he said. In the villages he visited during the campaign, Bishara was surprised at how much people needed to have their identity articulated, if not defined. "The need for identity is a basic human need," he maintained.

Al-Tajammu has links with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The party is assembled from different orientations including Faith, the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Islamists and secularists, liberals and leftists. Bishara wishes to maintain a relationship of mutual respect with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). "We can be supportive of the PNA in certain aspects, or critical in others such as democracy and human rights. Protecting and defending people in the occupied territories is part of our struggle and parliamentary work," he continued. During the Israeli elections, the PNA tried to support certain candidates. According to Bishara, they discovered that they were making a mistake and, since then, they have not attempted to impose political positions upon the Arabs in Israel.

Bishara noted that his party has no firm or official links with Arabs outside the Occupied Territories and Israel because it functions in another legal system and because most Arab countries are in a state of war with Israel. However, Al-Tajammu enjoys good relations with certain intellectuals and journalists in Egypt and Jordan. "We want to have good relations with Arab democratic forces and with Arab governments. The questions is how?" Bishara mused.

Stillborn ceasefire

Israel has broken the April ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel with its continued attack on civilian areas, writes Zeina Khodr

Across villages in southern Lebanon, residents fear the latest military escalation is a prelude to another wide-scale Israeli attack on Lebanon. There are also concerns that the April ceasefire deal will collapse with the right-wing victory in Israel since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been critical of the deal from the moment it was reached.

On 10 June, Israel lost five of its soldiers in the bloodiest resistance attack against occupying forces since Israel's 17-day offensive on Lebanon ended. Monday's attack brought to nine the number of Israeli soldiers killed since Operation Grapes of Wrath last April. Israel responded by shelling villages in the south, killing a Lebanese civilian. It also voiced threats that it would not "hesitate to retaliate even if it means civilians will get hurt".

The resistance attack did not breach the 27 April ceasefire understanding brokered to halt Israel's air, artillery and naval bombardments. The understanding bars attacks on civilian targets on both sides but sanctions armed resistance on Israeli forces in the nine-mile wide zone they occupy in South Lebanon.

Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres warned against escalating attacks in the south and Netanyahu vowed to "take care" of Hezbollah guerrillas once he forms a government.

The atmosphere prevailing in the south is one of fear and anxiety where villagers have not even completed rebuilding what was destroyed by Israel's aggression in April, according to the French-language *L'Orient le Jour* daily. The opposition *Nida Al-Watan* daily expressed concern at the deteriorating security situation in South Lebanon: "Israel's pounding of civilian targets showed that it does not respect the ceasefire." While the pro-Syrian *As-Sharq* daily predicted a dangerous period ahead in the region with a newhardt government in Israel.

But Ahmed Khalife, a senior researcher at the Institute for Palestine Studies, said a large-scale attack is unlikely for the time being. "It is not eminent, especially in light of the Arab summit in Cairo. Likud is not interested in sending a message which is destructive to the peace process," he said.

Mohamed Mashoushi, deputy editor-in-chief of *As-Safir* daily, said: "Netanyahu will deal with the buffer zone in a tougher manner than Peres. I don't want to say there will be another wide-scale operation, but I don't think the situation in the south will be calm. More heat is expected in the near future."

Meanwhile, southerners are paying a heavy price for being on the front-line. The village of Yuhim-Schikif and Tabey outposts.

"We have never lived like human beings in this village. I was 16 when Israel started to hit here," said Shawki Nasr, a schoolteacher. During Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath — which killed more than 200 Lebanese, mainly women and children — Shawki's home was hit. Luckily, the Nasr family were taking shelter in Beirut.

After the onslaught, Shawki had no alternative but to return to his village — life had to go on. "I am a teacher, not a resistance guerrilla. I can't work on anything else because my health doesn't allow me. My salary is not enough. I earn \$30,000 pounds [US\$340] and I have a wife and two children. Where can I go? I have no money for rent," he said.

Shawki's children were also deprived of living a normal childhood. They grew up in an atmosphere of fear and are forbidden from playing in the streets at all times. "The children are always scared, especially after our house was hit. They sit in the corner and cry. But we have no other choice but to stay here," said Shawki's wife, Umm Mohamed.

When asked if they were afraid of bombing, nine-year-old Mohamed and his six-year-old brother Ali could only say: "I am afraid of bombing [and] warplanes — they hit us. Israel kills children." The trauma and fear Shawki's family feels is not exclusive to the south.

The livelihood of 1,300 fishermen is also at stake because of an ongoing Israeli naval blockade. The siege, imposed in February 1995, which violates Lebanon's territorial waters, does not allow them to venture more than a few 100 metres into the sea.

Fishermen in the Sidon port complain they are unable to catch enough fish to make ends meet. "There are none on the coast. We aren't able to fish in deep waters. Instead, our nets gather shells with sharp edges that cut through the mesh. This is expensive to repair," they said.

Their safety is also threatened. In the port of Tyre, they have come under attack. Israeli gunboats last week abducted three fishermen and led their boat to an unknown destination. In previous incidents, gunboats detained fishermen and released them after several hours of questioning.

The situation in the south is precarious and there are concerns that the ceasefire will not last even until a monitoring group is set up to deal with violations.

Meanwhile, inter-Arab contacts have intensified to counter the political changes in Israel. Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri has welcomed the upcoming Cairo summit saying it would strengthen Lebanon's position in demanding an Israeli withdrawal from the south. The summit is expected to reaffirm the principle of exchanging land for peace. Observers are stressing the necessity of Arab solidarity. But some analysts here say no tangible results will materialise because Arabs are deeply divided and they have not mapped out a clear strategy. If no concrete results emerge from the summit, South Lebanon may again become the nightmare of the Middle East when efforts towards full peace fail.



Palestinians in Gaza watch a TV broadcast of the Israeli Knesset meeting after the swearing-in ceremony of the new Israeli Likud-led government (photo: AFP)

Taking off the gloves

Palestinian human rights chief Eyad Sarraj has been arrested by Gazan police — again. Graham Usher in Jerusalem follows his trials and tribulations

On 9 June, the commissioner-general of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights (PICHR), Dr Eyad Sarraj, was arrested by Palestinian police at his home in Gaza for the third time in six months.

As with Sarraj's previous detentions on 7 December 1995 and 18 May this year, no charges were made against him by the Palestinian Authority's (PA) attorney-general in Gaza, Khalid Al-Al-Kidrahi. There was only a cryptic comment, on this occasion, that the arrest was "not related to his human rights activities, the work of his association or his freedom of expression". Unlike the previous arrests, however, when Sarraj was detained and treated "well", this time the PA meant business.

On 10 June, 12 Palestinian police officers raided the offices of the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme — of which Sarraj is also director — where they "found" 95 grammes of hashish among Sarraj's papers. Meanwhile, in a

note smuggled out of prison, Sarraj wrote that he had been beaten and that the PA was trying to frame him on drug charges.

From the moment he assumed the position of commissioner-general of the PICHR last summer, Sarraj has been outspoken in his denunciation of the PA's human rights record, especially in Gaza. His arrest in December followed a public meeting in which Sarraj stated that of the 400 human rights complaints the commission had filed to the PA's attorney-general, "none had been answered". The May arrest came after the publication in the *New York Times* of an interview with Sarraj where he described the Palestinian regime in Gaza as "dictatorial, oppressive and corrupt".

But the spark for Sarraj's current detention appears less his statements to the press than a "personal letter" he wrote to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat after his release on bail from prison on 26 May. In an interview on CNN, the

PA leader said that he had freed Sarraj because he had "apologised" to the PA. In his letter, Sarraj countered:

"You [Arafat] know that is not true. I apologise for any personal hurt caused to you but not concerning the facts. You are the first to know that the work of the PICHR, established by your decree, was damaged because of the PA's failure to cooperate. I did not go to the media until I had knocked on all the doors. My press statements did not exceed the painful reality... of corruption, nepotism and torture in prisons." Sarraj concluded his appeal by advising the PLO leader that "instead of controlling me you should control the mechanism [i.e. the PA's security forces] which undermines accepted standards of human rights".

On receiving the letter, sources say Arafat "exploded", ordered Sarraj finally to take off the gloves. After being held incommunicado for four

days, Sarraj was summoned to a PA military tribunal on 13 June where he was charged with "striking a police officer" and remanded for a further 15 days. Two hours later, he appeared at a Gaza magistrate's court where he was "released" on bail on the charge of possessing drugs. Looking tired and shaken, Sarraj pleaded not guilty to both the drug and assault offences.

For Sarraj's lawyer, Khader Shkirat, the new assault charge is no less spurious than the drug charge. "Sarraj was remanded illegally by the military tribunal," he says, "because assaulting a police officer is not a security offence but a civil crime, which should be tried in a civil court."

It is a line of reasoning which has prevailed in the High Court in Gaza which, on 16 June, demanded that the PA's attorney-general give "clear reasons within five days" for Sarraj's ongoing detention. Three days on, neither Al-Kidrahi nor Arafat has responded.

CANADIAN DAIRY PRODUCTS IN EGYPTIAN MARKETS

CDC (CCL)

NEFERTY

Ahmed Hafez khafaga, chairman of the board of NEFERTY, signs the agreement to import Canadian dairy products with Giles Peleg, head of the CDC. In front of them are Hisham Sabri, general manager of San Malo and Leval Lacteaux, international marketing manager.

After the agreement was signed at the CDC in Ottawa, each side was given a copy. Giles Peleg congratulates Ahmed Hafez.

powdered milk and cheddar cheese is expected to reach Egypt by the end of the year, which NEFERTY will distribute in the Egyptian market. NEFERTY has a good reputation in offering quality foodstuffs from all corners of the world to the Egyptian marketplace, following the wishes of the Canadian Ministry of Agriculture, represented by the CDC to maintain high standards which Canadian dairy products enjoy. The Canadian San Malo company has been chosen to export these products via NEFERTY the sole importer of Canadian dairy products. Why did the CDC choose NEFERTY as the sole importer of Canadian dairy products? Khafaga answered by saying that "This choice is not only because of our company's long-term cooperation with Canadians working in the field of dairy products, which began in 1991, but also because we were among the first Arab companies to enter the Canadian market and to gain its complete trust, which emerged as a result of our work with the Canadian Dairy Producers' Association. We were also the first company to introduce cheese from Quebec to the Egyptian market. Our relationship developed with the CDC which gave us the opportunity to have developed a successful working relationship for all these years."

The Egyptian flag was placed next to the Canadian flag during the signing of the contract, showing the trust and capability of the Egyptian company NEFERTY for its role in boosting commercial ties with the Canadian government.

IRA blast Ulster talks

A BOMB this week in Manchester, for which the Irish Republican Army (IRA) claimed responsibility, shattered expectations that real progress would be made towards an end to the conflict in Ulster in the second week of the current all-party peace negotiations, reports DOA El-Bey from London. Hopes had earlier been raised when the parties agreed to choose American Senator George Mitchell as chairman of the Northern Ireland talks.

The IRA selected their target well, if they were looking for a high casualty rate. The explosion went off on a sunny Saturday morning, when the streets were full of shoppers hunting for Father's Day presents. Also in the busy crowds were German and Russian visitors, who were in town a day before their national football teams met in the European Championships.

Had the IRA not given a coded warning to the police an hour before the bomb exploded, casualties would have been much higher. As it was, the police managed to evacuate 60,000 city-centre shoppers. The blast left more than 220 injured, a shopping centre shattered and \$5 million pounds worth of damage.

The Irish government declared one day after the bombing that it was considering cutting all relations with Sinn Fein and barring it from entering the talks at all. Irish Prime Minister John Bruton said, "Brutal, murderous acts of this kind are appalling and cannot be excused or explained away as any form of so-called sanction." The Irish Republic had been exerting behind-the-scenes efforts to convince the British government to allow Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, into the talks without an IRA ceasefire.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams fell short of denouncing the act, saying on the day of the explosion, "Whatever the cause of this morning's incident in Manchester, Sinn Fein's focus remains firmly fixed on the need to restore the peace process, and we will not be deflected from that task."

British Prime Minister John Major strongly condemned the bombing, describing it as an insult to both nations. He called on the IRA to announce an unequivocal ceasefire and denied that the bomb or any other act of violence would impede the peace talks in Ulster.

Northern Ireland's unionist parties are now more adamant than ever that the issue of decommissioning IRA weapons must top the agenda of the all-party talks and not come at a later stage, as the Irish and British governments have been suggesting. (photo: AFP)



Jailbird as kingmaker

Sheikh Hasina was undoubtedly more delighted than Begum Khaleda Zia about how disenchantment with Bangladeshi Islamists energised the secularist vote in last week's elections, writes Gamal Nkrumah

days when Islamabad held sway.

Today Sheikh Hasina is poised to become prime minister even though there was much uncertainty about the possibility of the election results producing a hung parliament. Her most serious rival is the widow of the general who seized power three months after Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's first prime minister, was assassinated in 1975. The widow, Begum Khaleda Zia, also entered politics after the assassination of a loved one — her husband, former President Ziaur Rahman, who was murdered by military officers in 1981.

Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia have been feuding ever since. Sheikh Hasina suspects that General Ziaur Rahman had a hand in the assassination of her father and cannot forgive the general's widow. The fact that the two leading Bangladeshi leaders are at loggerheads is no great mystery. What is surprising is that the Bangladeshi electorate became an interested party to the political and has often fuelled the backbiting.

Overshadowed by the Indian elections, the Bangladeshi election campaign was a low-key affair. Turnout was impressive: 73 per cent of the electorate voted. Over 440,000 security personnel and 40,000 troops were on duty, and the elections ran smoothly with very little of the violence that marred earlier elections. Since it gained independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh has lost two presidents through assassinations. There have been three military takeovers and numerous — officially 17 — coup attempts.

With most of its population illiterate, party symbols assumed greater importance than is usual in other countries. The boat, an all-important mode of transport in a country crisscrossed by rivers and streams, was the AL's symbol. The paddy rice sheaf was the BNP's. Rice is the staple diet of Bangladeshis and the most important food crop in the rich alluvial soils of the riverine country. The symbol of the Jatiya Party (JP) was the plough, another agrarian sign, and that of the Jamaat Islami the scale of justice, a reminder of the importance the party attaches to the implementation of the Islamic Shari'a.

The International Human Rights Watch/Asia organisation came out with a report on the eve of the elections warning that the power struggle between Bangladesh's two leading lady politicians "has forced a situation of lawlessness and civil strife in which wanton acts of violence have become routine features of the political process". But the Bangladeshi ambassador to Egypt, Tufail Haider, insisted that the elections were free and fair and that violence was kept to a minimum. "Twenty-eight people were killed in various places all over the country and a

couple of hundred were injured," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

There is a third political figure who is something of a dark horse. He is General Hussain Muhammad Ershad, a former military dictator who was unceremoniously driven out of power by the Bangladeshi pro-democracy movement in 1990. Later he was tried on corruption charges and imprisoned. He is serving a 13-year prison term. Undaunted, he directed his political campaign from his prison cell. His brother Kader jumped into the political fray too. Ershad contested five seats, including his hometown Rangpur, and his wife Rowshan ran for another four. Their adopted son, Saad, is the only family member who did not contest any seats and is staying put on the political sidelines.

Unfortunately, new ideas are not the prerogative of those who spend a long time in prison. General Ershad's ideas of governing Bangladesh have not radically changed since the days of his dictatorship. Nevertheless, the jailbird emerged as kingmaker. His JP now appears to have a decisive role to play in the hung parliament. He called Begum Zia's government "the demonic face of democracy". The AL is confident of forming a government with the JP, which in turn notified President Abdur Rahman Biswas that it welcomes joining the AL in a ruling coalition. "We have lent support to the AL," said JP Secretary-General Mizanur Rahman Chawdhury.

The AL has not held power since 1975. Together with the JP, the AL now leads a bloc of 167 seats. Another 30 seats are reserved for women parliamentarians, and repolling in 27 constituencies has confirmed the AL as the most popular party in the country. Will there be a radical change in foreign policy? "There will be a shift in accent and an improvement in relations with India. But the basic parameters will remain the same," Ambassador Haider assured the *Weekly*.

There is a widespread feeling in Bangladesh that the country's all-powerful, giant neighbour is insensitive to Bangladeshi pride and development prior-

ities. Bangladesh accuses India of harbouring tribal Shanti Bahini guerrillas in its Tripura state from where they organise incursions into the Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh. New Delhi denies the charge. India is also blamed for the cross-border smuggling of a large range of goods. Again New Delhi turns a blind eye to such peevish ramblings.

But the most sensitive issue that dampens relations between the two neighbours is their bickering over water. During the ongoing rainy monsoon season, India is expected to release excess water through the Farakka Barrage along Bangladesh's northern border. India has done that sort of thing before. The Bangladeshi rivers and waterways are then flooded often causing much destruction of life and property. The Ganges River, called the Padma in Bangladesh, is holy water in India. In Muslim Bangladesh only Allah is holy. Pitting Padma against Ganges, the Bangladeshi Islamists are stirring up trouble. But the common man in Bangladesh is more worried about floods, power cuts, crop failure and clean drinking water or the lack of it. When water is short in the dry season, India is accused of withholding water supplies from Bangladesh — causing widespread water shortages. All Bangladesh's political parties deplore India's refusal to give Bangladesh its fair share of the Ganges, or Padma, waters.

Bangladesh, with a current Gross National Product (GNP) per capita of \$223, might be poor, but it is no irrelevant country. The Bangladeshi electorate is just over 56 million — slightly less than the total population of Egypt, Iran or Turkey. With over 120 million people, Bangladesh is the world's second most populous Muslim-majority country. It fits the classic stereotype of a Third World country with all the accompanying economic, political and social ills of the world's less-developed nations. Bangladesh is a recipient of substantial humanitarian and disaster relief aid. Some \$2,405 million in foreign aid was promised by Bangladesh's Western Gulf Arab and Japanese donors but only \$1,558 million was received in 1993-94. All economic and social indicators point to Bangladesh as a country in dire need of development.

The unsung heroes of last week's Bangladeshi general elections are Bangladeshi President Biswas and caretaker government chief Muhammad Habibur Rahman. Bangladesh was embroiled in civil unrest and a crippling political impasse earlier in the year. Without the wise leadership of the 11-member caretaker government installed after opposition forces requested that the BNP government be replaced by a neutral one to preside over elections arrangements, last week's polls would have been a failure. The February elections were boycotted by the AL and other opposition groups. BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia was then forced to step down last March and the Habibur Rahman caretaker government ran the day-to-day affairs of state.

The most important aspect of the elections apart from the demise of the Islamists is the new policy of constructive dialogue between opposing political parties.

"God rewards those who forgive and compromise," Bangladeshi President Biswas said quoting the Qur'an. The Islamists were cer-

Southern dis-Comfort

An incriminating Senate report on shady land deals, partners who are convicted felons and a sexual harassment suit that won't go away — can things get much worse for Clinton, asks Tarek El-Tablawy

In Little Rock, Arkansas, "where the men are men and the cattle are nervous", there's not much to do during the day or, for that matter, at night. Entertainment is strictly limited to visiting some smelters, lounging in the Capitol Hotel Bar or frequenting restaurants like Cock of the Walk, where they serve deep-fried catfish and deep-fried pickles.

If this does little to whet one's appetite, then the political gourmet can sink his teeth into the verdicts handed down by an Arkansas jury, deep-frying three of US President Bill Clinton's former partners and colleagues. Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker and Madison Savings & Loans head Jim McDougal and his wife Susan were recently found guilty on 24 out of 30 counts of fraud and conspiracy. McDougal was Clinton's partner in the Whitewater land development deal, which is approaching national scandal status for its alleged fraudulence.

In a briefing before reporters, Clinton said, "I've known Jim Tucker for years and on a personal level I'm sad for him and his family." Probably not as sad as Tucker, who faces up to 10 years in prison, as well as another criminal trial for tax evasion.

A moment of silence is also in order for Jim McDougal, who faces up to 84 years in prison. The former S&L head and Tucker, however, may attempt to reduce their sentences by plea bargains and singing louder than a canary about the Clintons' role in the Whitewater land deal. More than likely, this is what independent Whitewater counsel Kenneth Starr and his team of prosecutors are hoping for. Hook enough of the small players and you could end up frying the big fish.

Such a turn of events would be the White House's worst nightmare come true, especially given the mysterious reappearance of Rose Law Firm billing records in the White House long after they were subpoenaed. Although Clinton has not been so fortunate. A draft report released by Senate Whitewater Committee Republicans, which was published in the *Washington Post* on Sunday, concluded that the First Lady most likely played a role in restricting the inquiry into White House Deputy Counsel Vincent Foster's suicide, in order to keep potentially embarrassing documents under wraps.

The evidence suggests that Mrs Clinton, upon learning of Mr Foster's death, "dispatched her trusted lieutenants to contain any potential embarrassment or political damage," quoted the newspaper.

Foster had worked on questions about the Clintons' Whitewater real estate venture and a controversy over White House Travel Office firings.

Couple the finding of this report with the sexual harassment charge made by Paula Jones against Clinton, the conviction of three close associates, and the draft-dodging issue, the incumbent president could find no matter how many times Dole puts his foot in his mouth, re-election will be a far cry from being easy.

To make a bad situation worse, this week, Arkansas bankers Herby Branscum and Robert Hill are standing trial for allegedly submitting \$13,000 in phony expense vouchers to their banks and then channelling some of this cash to reimburse themselves for contributions made to Clinton's 1990 gubernatorial campaign. Clinton will have to testify again at this trial. At the very least, a conviction here could tie Clinton more closely to other wrongdoings while he was governor of Arkansas.

Clinton may be shaking Dole and the Republicans rejoicing, but Arkansans it business as usual. At the Capital Hotel Bar in downtown Little Rock, one local told a reporter, "Now, if Clinton were found out to be secretly Catholic, then we'd be talking scandal."

When Whitewater first surfaced in 1992, Jim McDougal told reporters that the financial figures revealed that Whitewater was nothing. "A sophomore accounting class would know it. But the arithmetic is beyond the comprehension of a gaggle of Yankees reporters," he said. He then went on to file for Congress, saying, "The Republicans have been starving Americans for 100 years. I dislike them intensely." He added that he had been "fighting the forces of oppression" since he was 12 and then produced a photograph of himself as a child in which he was dressed as a soldier. A little melodrama never hurt.

Except now — a time when Clinton is attempting to tout himself as a moral crusader, a liberal Batman of sorts. The Whitewater scandal seriously tarnishes this image, especially in light of the fact that in the 1992 presidential race Clinton hacked away at the Re-

publicans, dubbing them self-serving and cliquish.

"For 12 years of this Reagan-Bush era, the Republicans have let S&L crooks and self-serving CEOs [chief executive officers] try to build an economy out of paper and perks," he said. However, during the Branscum-Hill trial, prosecutors will attempt to prove that Branscum's \$7,000 post-campaign contribution to Clinton was linked to a same-day discussion between the two men on appointing Branscum to the state highway commission. They will also try to draw parallels with this and the \$180,000 in personal loans that Branscum's bank extended to Clinton for his 1990 gubernatorial campaign.

Other evidence presented by Michael Chernoff, the Republican special counsel to the Senate Whitewater committee, reveals that "new testimony before the Senate indicates that Mr Clinton himself took an active part in obtaining one of the original Whitewater loans — one evidently approved as a favour after the bank's political lobby intervened". Chernoff adds that when Clinton's accountant raised early legal objections to parts of McDougal's Whitewater proposal, "Mr Clinton pulled him aside and told him to back off". Moreover, some of these loans were allegedly funnelled into Clinton's and McDougal's accounts to cover losses accrued in the failing Whitewater deal.

These are all charged that Tucker could shed some light on if he folds under pressure from prosecutors.

But even unexplained, or perhaps especially unexplained, they cast a dark shadow over the Clintons' political ethics.

Democrats, on their part, are attempting to plug the holes in their sinking moral ship, arguing that the Whitewater issue is nothing more than a partisan kick-hunk aimed at derailing the Clinton campaign.

Arkansas state history points to the opposite: that this is normal daily behaviour for the state's politicians dating back over a century. In a book entitled *Territorial Ambition, Land and Society in Arkansas, 1800-1840*, S Charles Bohon cites an 1819 letter from Robert C Henry, a Kentucky carpetbagger who is trying to convince his brother to move to Arkansas. "Should I be favoured with the appointment of judge, I shall have it greatly in my power to serve my friends... we could do almost as we pleased," wrote Henry.

Clinton, if the charges are sustained, is familiar at least with the spirit of the text. McDougal followed the text in spirit and to the letter. Evidence presented before the Senate committee reveals that from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, a symbiotic relationship between Governor Clinton, McDougal and his associates existed. Chernoff notes, "For a time, McDougal had a say in state appointments, enjoyed personal access to the governor and won valuable concessions."

Back at the Capitol Hotel Bar, the atmosphere is buzzing as freely as ever. Judges, lawyers and business men are tossing back drinks, and discussing kickbacks, rate-offs, pay-offs, construction graft and hush money so nonchalantly that it leaves the casual observer wondering if Clinton ever really entertained the notion that he committed a few political faux pas at all. Prosecutors are, however, not wondering.

Even in the best-case scenario, one where Clinton emerges from this scandal guilt-free, he may not be politically unscathed. In essence, this case has all the makings of a national scandal that could leave Clinton jobless. It has sex, a suicide, bank fraud, misappropriation of funds and a fair degree of nepotism. It could, actually, be a mini-series on prime-time television.

For Clinton, it is a recurring nightmare. He told reporters following news of Tucker's conviction that he wanted to put matters behind him. Before this latest re-occur, however, some questions will have to be answered. Still unexplained is why did the White House meet with senior Treasury Department officials to obtain confidential information on the Madison S&L criminal referrals? Why did Clinton attempt to keep a sympathetic Treasury official in place as the final decision-maker for the Madison investigation? And why did the administration not allow federal law enforcement officials access to Whitewater documents in Vincent Foster's office after his suicide? For one reason or another, Clinton has chosen to lay down with dogs, and has come up with fleas. The final question now is just how hard will he have to scratch.

Nonetheless, whether this amounts to a cover-up or just a lapse in judgment and a bad business call, there is a certain degree of irony, best reflected in the brochure Clinton and McDougal produced in the mid-1980s on Whitewater. It said, "Better bring your checkbook... this kind of place won't stay a secret for long."



Sheikh Hasina

(photo: AP)

17/6/1996

General's star rises

Yeltsin won fewer votes than expected in the Russian presidential elections and, to counter the Communists, he is grooming General Aleksandr Lebed for power, writes Abdel-Malek Khalil from Moscow

About 70 per cent of Russia's 106 million voters cast ballots last Sunday. Russian President Boris Yeltsin narrowly beat his main rival, Communist presidential hopeful Gennady Zyuganov. Soon after the declaration of the initial results, Yeltsin said, "The election results showed that the overwhelming majority of voters backed the course pursued by us over the past five years." Nevertheless, the Communists are not entirely out of the race. They still have a chance to prove their mettle in next month's run-off between Yeltsin and Zyuganov.

The Communists have strong support among important segments of the electorate and especially in rural and industrial areas. Yeltsin scored highest in Russia's two largest cities, the capital Moscow and the chief port and former czarist capital, St Petersburg, where the economic reforms have achieved limited results. The industrial centres of the Urals and Siberia stood staunchly behind the Communists.

Yeltsin won 35.2 per cent of the vote and Zyuganov followed close behind with 32 per cent. Ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky collected less than six per cent of the vote, while centre-right candidate Grigory Yavlinsky got just over seven per cent. Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's score was hardly worth mentioning. However, the greatest surprise was right-wing General Aleksandr Lebed who won 11 million votes or about 15 per cent of the electorate's votes. Lebed emerged as the high-flying star. There were even calls for Yeltsin to step down and hand over the reigns of power to him.

Yeltsin, in one of his first post-election moves, signed a decree announcing that Lebed, with his unexpectedly strong third place in the first round of the presidential election, would head Russia's Security Council, which oversees the Russian military and police forces. Following a brief meeting in the Kremlin, Lebed issued the direct endorsement Yeltsin had been seeking, saying, "11 million voters believed I could guarantee the security of citizens. I am an officer and must be worthy of their trust."

Defence Minister Pavel Grachev submitted his resignation to Yeltsin on Monday after being told of Lebed's new appointment. Grachev, who has been repeatedly criticised for his abysmal handling of Russian military affairs, refused to work under Lebed, his long-time rival. Grachev was regarded as a close associate of Yeltsin, but late the Russian president has seen Grachev as a liability because of his poor performance as head

of the army and for his military disasters in Chechnya. Lebed opposed the invasion of the breakaway Russian republic from the very start and has accused Grachev of impeding the reform and modernisation of Russia's army.

Lebed turned down Zyuganov's offer of joining forces against Yeltsin and forming a "platform of patriotism". Lebed is very critical of the Communists' record. "Zyuganov can offer whatever he wants. We're through with Communism," he said. "Communism is over, dead and finished." The Communists are just as critical of Lebed, his style of leadership and lack of organisational skills. "Lebed has no party behind him, no mass party organisation, just a name," complained Gennady Selennyov, the Communist speaker of parliament, after Lebed's rebuff of Zyuganov's overtures. Other leading Communist Party personalities dismissed Lebed's alliance with Yeltsin as of little consequence.

There is a future about the day on which the second round of the elections will be held. Election law stipulates that the run-off be held on a non-working day, preferably at the weekend. Election officials have so far proposed scheduling it on Sunday, 30 June. But the president, believing the turnout would be higher on a weekday, has prepared a draft law to declare Wednesday, 3 July as a public holiday. Yeltsin is trying hard to push the bill through parliament and will probably win the day.

Lebed, the youngest of the presidential candidates, was born on 20 April 1950 in the Rostov region of south-central Russia. He is a veteran of the Afghan War — a war that has helped shape his ideological beliefs and political orientation. Lebed, of working-class background, was quickly promoted through the ranks of the Soviet Red Army after graduating at the Ryazan Higher Airborne Troops Command School. He is a fervent nationalist who has repeatedly called for the reformation and rebuilding of the demoralised Russian army. Lebed feels that the revamping of the army is the first step towards the restoration of Russia as a superpower.

The results of the first round of the elections showed that a large number of Russians see Lebed as their champion and the nation's saviour. Lebed went into active politics after his resignation from the military. He has been a member of the Russian Duma, or parliament, since 1995. Many observers see Lebed as the real winner of the 16 June Russian presidential elections.



THE OLD: A Russian World War II veteran makes his way past pro-Yeltsin supporters outside the Russian Duma. The elderly and pensioners have seen their savings disappear since Yeltsin came to power five years ago



THE YOUNG: A youngster peers from a window giving away Yeltsin posters in downtown Moscow. The young, unlike the old, favour the reelection of Yeltsin (photos: AP)

Yeltsin's last hurrah

Modelled on the US version of campaign politicking and replete with a barrage of opinion polls proclaiming Russian President Boris Yeltsin's gains and a massive dose of pro-Yeltsin media propaganda, the Sunday, 16 June presidential election results in Russia appeared fairly predictable. Although most foreign commentators dismissed Russian opinion polls for their notorious inaccuracy, political analysts continued to use poll results to predict that Yeltsin would capture about one-third of the votes, with his Communist opponent Gennady Zyuganov trailing behind with an estimated one-quarter. Voting results indeed confirmed the polls' inaccuracy. With 89 per cent of the votes counted on Monday, Yeltsin had captured 35 per cent of the vote to Zyuganov's 32 per cent.

On Sunday, voters nationwide flocked to the polls with an estimated 69 per cent turnout. Voting, which began in the far northeastern region of Chukotka and moved westwards across Russia's 11 time zones, was more active than during the December 1995 parliamentary elections, the central electoral commission reported. Yeltsin campaign chief Sergei Filatov told journalists that the turnout "is playing in favour of the Communists". However, an undaunted Yeltsin cast his ballot on Sunday, confidently dismissing the chances of a Communist victory; "it's out of the question," he bragged. But Gennady Selennyov, the Communist speaker of parliament, predicted that Zyuganov had "very good chances of winning the second round", the Russian news agency *Interfax* reported. Since, as expected, neither of the leading candidates captured the 50 per cent of the vote required to win, run-off elections will be held in early July.

Until election day, Yeltsin's camp and the Communists were accusing each other of planning election fraud. To prevent rigging, the Communists mobilised a 200,000-strong contingent to monitor the 92,500 voting centres, and some 1,000 foreign observers joined the election watch. Yeltsin sent armed guards to supervise the polls. Thousands of soldiers patrolled a tense capital, protecting it from potential "acts of terrorism". Still, there was scattered violence. In Bryansk, in south-west Russia, a senior police official was wounded when a bomb exploded as he was leaving his house. And police in the southern city of Stavropol received calls warning them that several buildings had been mined.

Political analysts contend that most Russians interpret the contest between Yeltsin and Zyuganov as a choice between a continuation of Yeltsin's flawed reforms or a return to Soviet-era policies under the Communists. For millions of Russians, Yeltsin has indeed become the totem of the market economy. He is so profoundly unpopular and evokes such passionate resentment that media experts decided to keep his picture out of any TV election campaign slots. The advertising strategy was simple: a spokesperson for Yeltsin, portrayed as the average voter, faithfully delivered the packaged Yeltsin message: "If we don't make a mistake on 16 June, if we continue along the way we

have chosen, the improvement will begin in one year." "A familiar theme this," commented political analyst David Hearst in *The Guardian Weekly*. "On October 28, 1991, Yeltsin promised the pain would last about half a year. In autumn 1992, he pretended to see the first signs of increasing production... The cynicism of these statements is extraordinary."

In Yaroslavl, an industrial town 260km northeast of Moscow, where Yeltsin was vociferously heckled throughout his campaign speech, workers vented their fury. "All we ever get from you are promises," was the common refrain, interrupted by the occasional curse. Miners from the Vorkutinskaya coal region, who like other workers had not been paid in months, angrily displayed their food coupons which they now receive in lieu of salaries. "This is not wartime, it is the reformed far north and we get coupons for God's sake!" shouted an enraged miner. "We risk our lives digging for coal and they pay us in bits of paper."

In effect, non-payment of workers' wages has become a permanent feature of Yeltsin's ill-fated administration. As a result of untenable working conditions and endemic wage delays, the miners' vote — which had helped Yeltsin win the 1991 presidential elections — most probably went to the Communists. Factory workers were just as likely to vote Communist. Since Russia started its head-over-heels privatisation drive, production has decreased by 50 per cent and lay-offs are rampant. Expressing the workers' despair Svetlana Vinogradova, a 43-year-old unemployed secretary, explained why she voted Communist. "In the past everyone had a job and there was no unemployment," she said. "We used to live in a superpower with a strong industry. Now all I see around me is banks. Who needs them? What do they do that's useful? We barely produce cars these days."

Since the late 1980s some 90,000 companies have been sold, mostly at a loss. To fulfil an International Monetary Fund loan precondition, the government sold about three-quarters of the public sector to the companies' managers, who paid by borrowing from their company budgets. Many of the new owners relied on their long-established political networks to receive government subsidies. As a result, nascent private businesses continued to function like the public sector — with the owners capitalising on state funds, while pocketing the profits. In 1993, the cost of such direct and indirect subsidies amounted to 22 per cent of the gross national product.

According to many economists, Russia's path to the so-called free market has been aberrant — to say the least. Neither socialist nor capitalist, the country's hybrid economy defies theoretical denunciation. Unable to otherwise define a system that has become chaotic, special terms now vaguely refer to "bureaucratic or political capitalism", "state corporatism" and "clientelism". In reality, the economy's most salient feature is its non-productive rental and speculative base. "Even investment banks have no industrial planning strategy, no programme and no means to modernise and restructure enterprises," explained a

Russian finance expert. Moreover, social and political instability induces large-scale capital flight — at the annual rate of \$50 billion. It is, therefore, not coincidental that the left and centre opposition candidates unanimously promoted the return to a measure of state control over the economy, currency exchange barriers and the repatriation of exported capital.

With the economy in a shambles, large-scale labour protests and a dismal approval rating of six per cent back in December, Yeltsin's election lead may seem miraculous. The man who was until recently dubbed as "not smart" and whose notorious alcoholism caused Russians to ask if a dangerous buffoon was running the Kremlin, made a remarkable comeback. How did Yeltsin manage the seemingly impossible? Manufacturing consent through media manipulation may partially explain his success story. The largely pro-big business, pro-Yeltsin media packaged him by demonising Gennady Zyuganov and playing on many people's rejection of their Communist heritage. "As it is impossible to prove that Boris Yeltsin is good, after everything that has happened in the country, his campaign managers were trying to prove that the opposition is extremely bad," explained liberal economist and leader of the democratic opposition Grigory Yavlinsky. Until the eve of the elections, the networks were saturated with Yeltsin ads interspersed with horror tales of the Stalin-era gulags. "When I switched on the TV, I had the impression Stalin had died yesterday," commented a news analyst. Among this heavy-handed dosage of anti-Communist propaganda, Zyuganov's slots were few and far between. "It is almost as if the Zyuganov message is carried with an official government health warning," commented Hearst.

Beyond the propaganda strategy, Yeltsin readily acknowledged the failure of his economic reforms — seemingly veering from his course. After the Communists won last December's parliamentary elections, Yeltsin sacked his most visible non-liberal ministers. He then somewhat distanced himself from his long-standing and much criticised US foreign policy alignment by appointing Evgeny Primakov, a Gorbachev man and long-time Soviet diplomat, as minister of foreign affairs. He also went to China, where he paid tribute to the achievements of a system that had realised the difficult transition to a market economy without dismantling its social welfare system. But most significantly, he stopped the controversial privatisation drive.

Political analyst Bernard Frédéric believes that these steps cannot be dismissed as mere campaign cosmetics. "Such measures express a new political orientation. They signify the victory of the statist nationalists camp over the Western neo-liberals. And this new orientation is determined by the Russian people's formidable resistance to the social changes that have been imposed on them since the break-up of the Soviet Union," wrote Frédéric. Accordingly, if Yeltsin makes it through the second election round in July, he may have to show the Russian people yet another face.

Capitalist paradise lost

Great expectations followed by disillusionment is how Miso Alkalaj describes post-Cold War economic, political and social developments in Central and Eastern Europe

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1990 and the Soviet empire was obviously crumbling, the inhabitants of Central and Eastern European countries saw the West as a kind of paradise and market economy as the magic recipe that would soon bring them prosperity and affluence. They expected magnanimous financial aid as a matter of course. After all, the United States and other Western democracies had been lamenting the plight of these oppressed people for so long — surely they would now help them.

When given their first chance at free multi-party elections, citizens of former communist countries voted for any candidate who promised a clean and swift break with communism. This attitude was nicknamed the "monkey syndrome" — based on the observation of a Polish politician that "if the voters had a choice between a former communist and a monkey, they would vote for the monkey". The sooner they got rid of the old system, the sooner they would live in capitalism and be rich.

But soon dreams of prosperity started to fade. Financial aid was scant and what came did not trickle down to the man on the street. Free trade brought competition from technologically superior companies in Western Europe, the US and Japan; local manufacturers with their outdated machinery just could not keep up. Production dropped, workers were laid off and shiny shop displays offering the wealth of the world that few could buy became more a source of resentment and despondency.

Under socialism, unemployment was virtually unknown; having a job was regarded as a basic right. Now jobs became a "privilege" of those who were willing to make an effort. Socialist ideology always portrayed capitalism as a system based on theft and exploitation, while socialism was supposed to be based on honest pay for honest work and solidarity. As all things socialist were being rejected, many people started to believe the worst of both: that unemployment or poor pay were an infringement of their rights and that the only way to affluence was through dishonesty. Social discontent and crime soared.

Another problem became evident. Newly elected officials mostly came from the opposition; they were far from power under the old regime, so they had little or no experience at running the country. Even a poor driver with experience can handle a car better than somebody who has never sat behind the wheel before. Basic government did not function properly. With their lack of experience in hard-ball politics, new leaders were easy targets for Western politicians and businessmen who wanted to take advantage of them. The advice of Westerners was rarely questioned and assets were sold at bargain prices. Few realised that Western entrepreneurs came to make themselves rich, taking advantage of inexpensive natural resources and cheap labour.

Probably the worst aspect of new right-wing rulers was the fact that they managed to present themselves as grotesque caricatures of communist tyrants: most had learned the style of their politics in one-party states and their approach to government was "And now it's our turn!"

With the appalling state of the economy and rising poverty, it is understandable that voters in many East European countries reversed their votes at their second chance at free elections. Former communists — who reformed their parties' ideologies into various forms of social democracy — have already returned to power in Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Hungary. Communist Gennady Zyuganov is presenting a serious challenge to Boris Yeltsin in the Russian presidential elections. These countries are hardly likely to return to one-party rule, but laissez-faire capitalism is definitely on the way out.

In fact, one might argue that the right-wing regimes who have been elected to power in the former communist states of Eastern and Central Europe have gone a long way towards rehabilitating the ideas of socialism and communism: their bungling rule, the widespread corruption of their officials and the collapse of the economies of their countries have convinced many a voter that communist rule was not that bad.

Is this left-to-right-and-back pattern likely to keep repeating itself? Judging from existing positive examples, countries which manage to stabilise their economies are likely to elect moderate communist governments. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia — all of which enjoy a healthy economic recovery — are ruled by governments which manage to avoid both right-wing and leftist extremes.

Political stability in Eastern and Central Europe may therefore well depend on the success of economic recovery in these countries. We learn from history that political extremism, social strife and aggression go hand in hand with economic recession. Poverty causes despair and apathy — ideal grounds for the proliferation of right- or left-wing "saviours". If this is indeed a rule applicable to the future of the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the outlook is rather bleak.

The total population of these countries is over 328 million. CIA Factbook 1995 estimates the average gross national product per capita at \$4,558. This puts the GNP per capita of these countries below the poverty level of \$5,000 per capita, as defined by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. According to CIA sources, only some 40 million (12.26 per cent) of the population of Central and Eastern Europe live in a country with a GNP of more than \$5,000 per capita — Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Estonia. Some estimates are even more pessimistic: only the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia are above the poverty level — some 20 million people or just 8.59 per cent of the population of former Central and Eastern European socialist countries.

The aggregate inflation of former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe runs at 77.7 per cent — Belarus is the record holder with a whopping 29 per cent per month, measured by consumer prices in 1994. The total real gross domestic product of the region dropped by 3.1 per cent in 1995.

The writer is head of the statistics centre at the Joseph Stefan Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Privatisation push

SIX new laws aimed at speeding up the privatisation programme and raising the volume of private investments in Egypt were submitted to the People's Assembly this week for discussion.

Toppling the list is the new Banks and Credit Law which was finally passed last Saturday, allowing non-Egyptians to own more than 49 per cent of the capital of joint-venture banks, on the condition that the shares of each individual not exceed ten per cent. Non-Egyptians will be also allowed, according to a second law submitted to the parliament on Rules of Commercial Registration, to take part in a number of commercial activities such as exporting Egyptian goods.

The third law regulates the residence of foreigners in Egypt. According to this law, foreign expatriates will be exempted from the registration system of foreigners. The interior minister will now have the authority to extend the residence period of foreign investors and tourists from three to five years.

Fourth on the list is a law which exempts securities of the tax on capital gains so as to promote private ownership of public sector assets and attract small-scale investors to trade shares on the capital market.

Along similar lines, the assembly is also due to discuss a new draft law that exempts mutual funds from the income tax. This draft law aims at realising a tax equality between mutual funds and individuals whose share profits are tax exempt.

The assembly also began discussions on a new law which regulates construction works. The law aims at promoting the role of the private sector in solving the housing crisis in Egypt and to shelter private investors from onerous bureaucratic red tape and paying excessive fees to secure a building permit. These complicated procedures and fees were a main reason behind the private sector's reluctance to invest in rental housing.

The six laws, which were submitted to the assembly by the government two weeks ago, reflect Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri's efforts to speed up privatisation, double foreign investment and raise national growth rates.

Industrialists aid Iraq

A DELEGATION representing the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), which recently paid a five-day visit to Iraq, stressed that they will do their best to ensure that the basic needs of the Iraqi people are met.

Mamduh Thabet Mekki, vice-president of the FEI and head of the Egyptian delegation, speaking before over 300 members of the Iraqi Federation of Chambers of Commerce (IFCC), said that Egyptian industrialists understand the reasoning behind the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the international community, but are distraught by the current state of Iraq's industrial infrastructure and its consequences on the population's welfare.

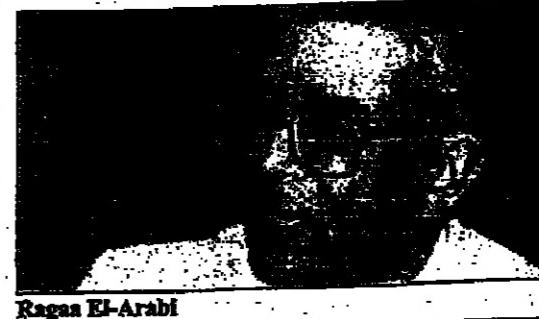
Officials from the Iraqi Federation of Industries and the IFCC told members of the Egyptian delegation that greater cooperation between the industrial sectors of both countries is a must. They added that Iraq's industrial sector has deteriorated to a degree where production has almost ground to a halt due to a shortage of raw materials and spare parts for the equipment.

In addition to the official meetings, representatives of the Egyptian food and pharmaceutical industries met with their Iraqi counterparts, who drew attention to the country's need for surgical thread, anaesthetics, antibiotics and spare parts for pharmaceutical factories. Also on the list are commodities such as sugar, oil, tea, infant formula and cereals.

Al-Ahram

Depositors' luck

El-Sherif, the giant among the defunct Islamic money investment companies was also the last to fall, leaving thousands of its depositors clamouring for their life savings. The prosecutor-general spoke to **Mona El-Fiqi** of his plans to refund the disheartened depositors



Ragaa El-Arabi

For depositors in El-Sherif Money Investment Company, there seems to be a light at the end of the tunnel of financial ruin the company is in. Government officials recently announced that the sales revenue from the sale of El-Sherif's assets to El-Shorouq Company in February 1996 will be used to fully refund depositors by May 1999.

El-Sherif is but one of 22 money investment companies (MIC) established in the mid-1980s to channel savings into investment projects, and claiming to offer an "Islamic alternative" to the banking system, whose interest payments are considered by a school of Islamic jurisprudence to be a form of usury in violation of Islamic *Shari'a*. But several years ago, these companies were forced to close their doors, unable to repay depositors after the government instructed them to restructure their flawed financial system. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of depositors were left out in the cold, having handed over a total of LE2.8 billion, \$2.2 billion, 25,000 pounds sterling, 160,000 French francs and 44,000 Saudi riyals to these MICs.

On El-Sherif's ledgers alone were the names of 55,720 depositors, with total deposits amounting to LE1.3 billion. To date, only about LE333 million of this sum has been refunded. According to the deal struck between the government and El-Sherif, the first group of depositors scheduled for a refund, received 25 per cent of their deposits in May. This group, however, was comprised of those who had deposited less than LE50,000. Officials add that refunding of 25 per cent of the company's total deposits will continue for the next four months.

"I've accepted an LE10 million letter of credit from El-Sherif," Ragaa El-Arabi, the prosecutor-general told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. This move was a step towards protecting the rights of El-Sherif's depositors. In other similar steps, El-Arabi explained that the assets of El-Sherif will be handed over to El-Shorouq gradually, with the new owner to receive assets equalising the sums refunded to depositors. "El-Sherif's assets will remain under se-

questration until the company pays off their depositors in full," said El-Arabi.

Those who have received money from El-Sherif consider themselves among the lucky few. To date, the prosecutor-general's office has succeeded in refunding a total of LE16.1 million and \$18,000, distributing this sum among 1,641 depositors in three MICs — the El-Safra Company, Dar El-Wafaa for Industrial and Commercial Investment and Nahdet El-Sharq.

Whatever success realised in refunding depositors in small MICs, however, was tempered by the problems encountered when dealing with larger MICs. With 159,670 depositors listed on its books, El-Rayyan Company is a case in point. The company holds deposits estimated at LE1.5 billion, of which only LE466 million have been refunded.

El-Rayyan's depositors have already received a 10 per cent refund, and another 10 per cent is currently being doled out. However, said El-Arabi, "The company's assets will cover only 25 per cent of the total deposits. Until new assets appear, the only option we are left with is to close the company's file." Priority, he added, was given to small depositors.

Complaints on the part of depositors were levelled at the government as well as the MICs. Some complained that while they had invested in US dollars, the government refunded them in Egyptian pounds at the exchange rate valid at the time of deposit, not the rate in effect at the time of refunding.

"When I heard that 25 per cent of El-Sherif's deposits were to be refunded, I went to the company to ask, but they didn't give me any in-

formation and said I should return again in two weeks," complained Saad Khalaf, one of El-Sherif's depositors. "If the government wanted to solve the problem, it should have, from the beginning, stood by these companies and assisted them in solving their financial problems until they repaid depositors. It shouldn't have just closed them down."

Another El-Sherif depositor, who wished to remain anonymous, was even less optimistic. "Despite all the declarations that the company's assets will be sold and the deposit refunded, I haven't received a single pound from the LE32,000 I invested in the company," she stated.

The main problem, explained El-Arabi, is that in the case of some small MICs, the assets to cover the deposits are there, but they need more time to sell them, gain liquidity and refund depositors. There are those MICs, however, for whom time is not the issue. Says El-Arabi, companies such as El-Salem Investments have no assets at all. Its owner simply skipped the country, leaving the 1,706 depositors high and dry and shortchanged out of LE50.7 million. Investors in this company, he said, will only receive their money if a court order is procured, or the owner gives the prosecutor-general the legal right to sell the company's assets and refund depositors. El-Salem's depositors are not the only ones left holding the torch by the flame. Depositors from seven other MICs are confronted with a similar scenario.

Fearing the worst, some depositors have exchanged their refund vouchers for goods purchased from "in-kind" repayment fairs — a move that El-Arabi strenuously opposes and has outlawed. Recalling that he warned depositors away from these fairs several times, El-Arabi added, "At first we agreed that some depositors would be allowed to exchange their refund vouchers for durable goods." The idea was short lived. Depositors began voicing complaints that the goods were sold at twice their retail value. El-Arabi subsequently closed down these fairs.

"I also warned the companies participating in these fairs that if they sell to depositors, the general prosecution department would not give them the refunded percentage of the vouchers," he stated. But this move did not please some of the depositors who deemed it better to purchase over-priced goods instead of taking the risk of not receiving any of their cash.

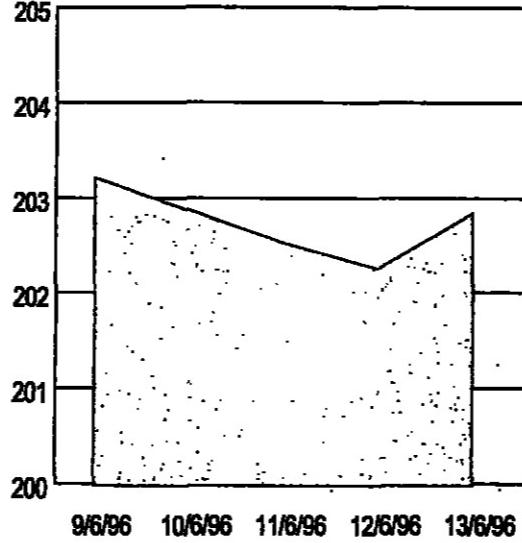
Market report**GMI slump**

FOR the third week in a row, the General Market Index (GMI) witnessed a decline, slipping by 0.14 points during the week ending 13 June to close at 202.86. Trading activity was also slumped, with the value of total transactions falling to LE75.1 million compared to LE199.4 the previous week.

Capturing the lion's share of market activity, the Egyptian Financial and Industrial Company traded 360,975 of its shares, or 19.71 per cent of total market transactions. With the value of trading in its shares reaching LE12.12 million, the company's stock gained LE1.64 per share to close at LE34.5. It was the shares of the Egyptian Developed Technology Company, however, that witnessed the greatest increase in share price. Closing at LE14, the company registered a 51.35 per cent increase during the week's trading.

The greatest loss was borne by the Hoechst El-Sharkia, with the value of the company's stock dropping by 11.11 per cent to level off at LE7.2 per share.

In all, the share value of 30 companies increased, 18 decreased and 35 remained the same.

**IMF public image**

IN A first of its kind move, a group of top International Monetary Fund (IMF) officials met last week with members of the press in an effort to gauge public opinion on the IMF's policies, reports Yasser Sobhy. The visiting delegation included members of the IMF's executive board, which includes Egyptian national Abdelsakour Shalan, the IMF's executive director for Egypt and 12 other countries. The delegation met with representatives of the banking sector, the stock exchange, the tax authorities and business.

Although the executive board is not involved in the day-to-day economic policy negotiations with individual countries — a task typically carried out by the IMF's technical staff — it has firmly say in approving agreements reached between the IMF and countries attempting to implement reform programmes.

In a meeting last Monday, members of the press conveyed to the delegation the negative image held by the public about the fund and its policies. In the eyes of the average Egyptian,

said members of the press, the IMF's policies have failed to bring about tangible results such as higher wages and lower unemployment rates. Moreover, the IMF's concentration on technical, monetary and financial issues seem to, the average consumer, to be at the expense of more important issues related to growth.

The delegation attributed this negative image of the IMF's policies to the short-term costs of reform, usually felt most by low-income groups. They explained that the IMF's experience in countries such as Chile and Colombia shows that speedy transformation to market economies brings with it long-term gains. The reforms implemented in Egypt, they said, attempt to generate growth by creating a wide investment base supported by financial balance and structural reforms including privatisation.

The delegation's next stop on the same kind of mission will be Jordan and Yemen.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

PROSPECTUS IN EGYPT CANADA FOR MINERAL OILS, PRODUCTION AND BLENDING OF JOINT STOCK COMPANY 'UNDER ESTABLISHMENT'. SUBJECT TO LAW 230 FOR THE YEAR 1989

Name of the company: Egypt Canada for Mineral Oils Production and Blending.

Legal status: An Egyptian joint-stock company, (subject to Law 230 for the year 1989 and its executive charter)

Date of preliminary contract: 12/5/1996

Legal headquarters: Cairo

The aim of the company: Collecting and refining mineral oils and mixing basic oils and producing mineral oil using the modern American technology D.C.H.

The company can carry out other projects or change its activity within the framework of the investment law. It can also contribute or share in any projects that the not subject to Law 230/1989 or condition that it receives the approval of the General Investment Authority and abide by law 95/1992.

Location: Tenth of Ramadan City.

Fiscal Year: Starts 1 January and ends on 31 December. The first fiscal year begins on the date of establishment and ends on December 31st of the following year.

Company Duration: Twenty Five years starting on the date of listing the name of the company in the trade register.

Capital : Authorized capital : \$15,000,000

Paid issued-in capital : \$ 7,500,000

Distributed over 150,000 cash nominal shares, each valued at \$50. The founders deposited a quarter of their shares in the capital in Banque Misr, the Qasr El-Nil branch. It is one of the banks licensed to receive demands for public subscription for account of the company being founded.

Founders:

Name	Nationality	# of shares	%	Value in \$
Banque Misr	Egyptian	15,000	10%	750,000
Mr. Yehia Ahmed El-Sayed El-Komi	Egyptian	30,000	20%	1,500,000
The Egyptian Arab Company for Trade (Yehia El-Komi and Co.)	Egyptian	15,000	10%	750,000
Titan Projects Ltd.	Canadian	37,500	25%	1,875,000
Mr. Amin Mahmoud Nimir	Egyptian	7,500	5%	375,000
Public subscription		45,000	30%	2,250,000
Total		150,000	100%	7,500,000

The number of shares held by the founders represents 70% of the Authorised Capital.

Shares offered for public subscription: 45,000 shares worth \$2,250 million. Each share is valued at US\$ 50. Both Egyptian and foreign individuals and institutions can subscribe to the offering.

Date of receiving stock debentures shareholders can receive debentures within a year from the company's listing in the Trade Register.

Date of starting and closing subscriptions: Subscription will last for two months starting 1/7/1996. It will be closed as soon as the offering is fully subscribed, with a minimum of 10 days from the opening of subscription.

Subscription lots: A minimum of 10 shares for individuals and 1,000 shares for institutions.

The following branches of Banque Misr will receive subscription orders: Cairo branch, overseas branch, Orman, Qasr El-Nil, Talaat Harb (Alexandria), Ismailia Branch, Port Said main branch, Suez branch, Mansoura, Damietta, Zagazig, Benha, Tanta, Damietta, Beni Suef, Sohag, Assuit, Aswan.

How to subscribe:

A subscription application must be filled and the money paid at the above mentioned branches. The application must be accompanied with identification documents.

Sum to be paid at subscription:

A quarter of the share nominal value (US\$12.5) is paid, in addition to two Egyptian pounds in issue fees per share. The rest of the value of each share is to be paid within a maximum of five years from the date of the establishment of the company. This will be according to the way and date decided by the company's and according to article 9 of the Articles of Association.

Issue fees include:

- expenses of printing temporary certificates and stock debentures
- Marketing expenses
- Administrative fees and other expenses
- Bank commission
- Expenses and issue fees for governmental entities

In LE
120,000
80,000
20,000
50,000
30,000
300,000

Board of Directors:

The company will be run by a board of directors consisting of a minimum of five members and a maximum of nine members. These are appointed by the shareholders' General Assembly for three years. It is necessary that each member be the shareholder of a minimum of at least \$10,000 worth of shares. This is to fulfil the right of shareholders to be represented in the board of directors each according to their contribution to the capital.

The General assembly is entitled to bring in an expert who does not comply with the previous requirements, as member of the board.

With an exception of the previous requirements, the founders have appointed the first board of directors to include:

1- A representative of Banque Misr.

2- Mr. Yehia Ahmed El-Sayed El-Komi

3- A representative of the Egyptian Arab Trading Company . (Yehia El-Komi and co.)

4- Two representative of Titan projects Ltd.

5- Mr. Amin Mahmoud Nimir.

6- Three representatives of the subscribers to be nominated by the company's first general assembly meeting.

Managers in Charge :

They will be nominated after the board's first meeting.

Company plan for the utilisation of subscription revenues:

Clampdown on substandard food

In a symposium held on Tuesday at the Nile Hilton by the State Information Service, Fakhry Zikry, head of the Administration for Food Supply Investigation, announced that a computer protection draft law is being prepared and will be put into operation. Zikry also stated that there will be a clampdown on substandard salt producers. 800 tons of substandard salt about to be sold within 10 days were seized, apart from another 300 tons of invalid salt.

MONEY & BUSINESS



Environmental legislation in Egypt

A LECTURE on environmental legislation in Egypt will be given by Salah Hafez, chairman of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency in the British Council Library at 8.00pm on Sunday, 23 June 1996.

This is the first in a series of public lectures taking place in the British Council Library as part of its monthly cultural programme. The programme includes lectures on literacy, economic reform, clean and renewable energy, and other topics.

Economic reform is not at the expense of the poor

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund (IMF) board delegation, currently in Egypt on a visit, said that the economic reform programme will increase the competitiveness of the Egyptian economy and upgrade the standard of living.

At a press conference, the IMF delegation to Cairo, stated that the economic reform programme will not add to the burden of the

poor by raising prices of commodities. The only aim of the reform is to maximise agricultural production and to redress the budget deficit.

During the press conference, the delegation was briefed on the negative viewpoint of the man in the street regarding the demands of the IMF from the Egyptian government, particularly its persistent request to

raise prices and its equivocating response of the Egyptian government's demand to have the last portion of its debts written off.

The IMF delegation explained that the organisation responsible for debt annulment is the Paris Club, which is composed of grant-making countries. They set the conditions for debt annulment and set the time for it.

The delegation clarified that the economic

reform programme may be painful in the short run, but experience shows that this pain comes as a result of the late cooperation with the IMF.

With regards to Egypt, the delegation expressed its optimism as Egypt managed to achieve a 4.5 per cent growth rate. The delegation attributed this success as a result of the launching of a strong base for in-

vestment, plus the other monetary reform measures speedily taken by the government.

The IMF board's visit to Egypt is the first of its kind to any country applying economic reform measures with the fund.

The delegation included Dr Abdel-Shakour Shalan, as well as representatives from the USA, Japan, Canada, Britain and Ireland.

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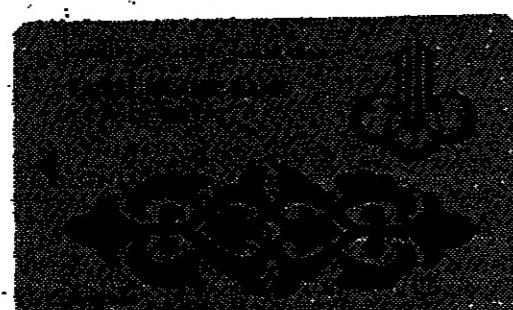
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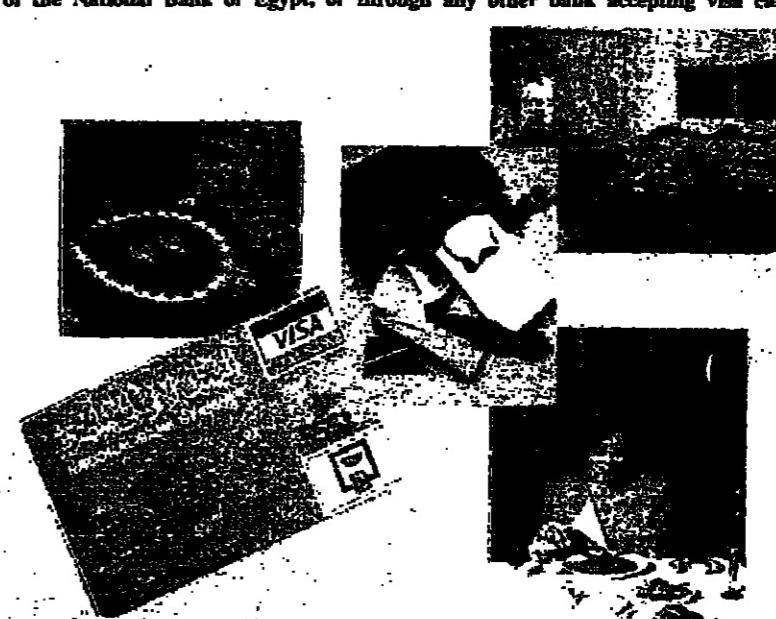


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The pledge hedge

Having risen to power on the shoulders of Jewish extremists and Likud hardliners, Netanyahu is now making good on his partisan pledges and campaign promises to his supporters. These are, however, the only promises he appears ready to keep. He has handed over to an orthodox Jewish party, which was instrumental in helping him form his coalition government, the Settlement Ministry post. This not only bodies off for West Bank and Gaza Palestinians, it bodies catastrophic. David Levy, a Likud moderate reluctantly holds the foreign affairs portfolio after manoeuvring a staunch hardliner Ariel Sharon from the newly-established National Infrastructure Ministry. Should Sharon accept the post, his authority, coupled with that wielded by the Settlements Ministry, will likely render dreams of securing a comprehensive regional peace as dead as Rabin.

Netanyahu has also given ample indication, outside of his cabinet appointments, that compromise with Arabs is an infrequently used word in his vocabulary. Although he has stated a readiness to meet with Assad and Lebanon's Hrawi, the meetings, says Netanyahu, will be held on the condition that no party walks in with preconditions. If this was not conditional enough, Netanyahu has asserted that Jerusalem is not an issue for debate. Palestine will not be and the Golan will not be exchanged for peace between Israel and Syria.

He encouraged Arafat to continue cracking down on Palestinian hardliners, but added that security remains his top priority. Israel's army, said Netanyahu, will have "full freedom to act against terrorism". Given that these actions will take place within Gaza and the West Bank, military manoeuvres on the part of Israel in these territories are likely to ignite more violence than they will thwart. In essence, he is digging a grave for the PNA and ushering them in.

The Arabs, however, are unwilling to engage in any unilateral capitulation or concession-making. The sooner Netanyahu realises this, the sooner peace will cease to be a term thrown around as lightly as the promises he makes.

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Al-Ahram Offices

Main office
AL-AHRAM, Al-Gala St. Cairo.
Telephone: 5786100/5786200/5786300/5786400/5786500
Telex: 20185/93346 Fax: 5786126/5786833

Overseas offices

USA
Washington DC: Atel El-Ghamri, Al-Ahram Office, Suite 1258, 529 National Press Bldg, Washington DC 20445; Tel: (202) 737-1212/1222.
New York: Atel El-Ghamri, Al-Ahram Office, 39th Fl., Chrysler Bldg, 405 Lexington Ave, New York NY 10174-0300; Tel: (212) 644-0740; Telex: 497 942 ITT U.S.; Fax: (212) 286-6440; Tel: (212) 286-0285.

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Moscow: Abdel-Malek Khalil, Al-Ahram Office, Kstuzovsky Pr Dom 7/4 Kv. 50, Moscow; Tel: 243 4014/230 2879; Fax: 230 2879
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Canada
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United Kingdom
London: Amr Abdel-Samie, Al-Ahram Office, 203 - 209 North Gower Street London NW1 2NU
Tel: 0171 388 1155; Fax: 0171 388 3130

France
Paris: Sherif El-Shouashby, Bureau Al-Ahram 26, Rue Marbeuf, 75008 Paris; Tel: (1) 537 7270; Al-Ahram F: Fax: (1) 428-93963.

Germany
Frankfurt: Abdou Moushier, Al-Ahram Bureau Friedrichstr. 15, 60323 Frankfurt; Tel: (069) 9714300/9714381 Fax: (069) 729571.

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Al-Ahram: "The forthcoming Cairo summit comes... in the words of President Mubarak, as a declaration to the world that the split in Arab ranks is at an end and that a new start has been made to unify Arab ranks."

(Mohamed Basha, 16 June)

A time for visionaries

An unambiguous vision of peace by next week's Arab summit conference, and an insistence that Israel honour its agreements, could save the beleaguered peace process, writes James Zogby

The Arab summit in Cairo can make an invaluable contribution to the search for peace in the Middle East. It can restore balance to what has become a distorted process and save the entire region from the devastation that would accompany the collapse or even deceleration of the current peace effort.

Arab Americans, much like the Arab leaders preparing to meet in Cairo, are committed to a peaceful and prosperous future for our people — a future in which rights are regained, security is ensured and economies developed, bringing new hope and opportunities to our long-suffering region.

The summit's final declaration will have a political impact on many target audiences: the Arab world, the US, Europe, and the Israeli government and people. A properly framed declaration in Cairo can ignite the hopes sparked on 13 September 1993, and can present a new challenge to the peacemakers. A statement that focuses on vision, emphasises positive principles and establishes a unified Arab response to the current crisis will "do much to counter disillusion.

While such a declaration is and of itself would be of historic import, it will have an even greater impact if made within a visionary framework. Peace, after all, is not an abstraction. The realisation of a just and comprehensive peace will create a dramatic new reality for the entire region. What needs to be com-

municated is a compelling Arab vision of the future and the possibilities it holds for all the peoples of the Middle East — a vision so attractive that people will be drawn to it. It is imperative that the promise of this future be understood so that it can be accepted and the status quo rejected.

To realise such a peace will, of course, require compromise. To this the Arab leaders have already committed themselves. But compromise is not surrender; compromise in its truest form occurs when two parties, instead of "giving up" their assets, invest them in each other in order to create mutually beneficial dividends — so that the rewards achieved by each are greater than the initial value of the investment. As envisioned by the architects of Madrid, Israel returns lands, Arabs give recognition and cooperation, and both sides benefit from a future of expanded opportunities for all.

Investment must be mutual, the compromise must be reciprocal: the Arab leaders must state this clearly and emphatically. The new government of Israel must come to understand that the Arab world is committed to a peace based on mutualism and reciprocity.

This commitment is no more than the reaffirmation of the fundamental ground rules that govern the peace process and establish its firm foundation.

Only by affirming mutualism and reciprocity will the heads of state make it clear that ground rules al-

ready established should be honoured, that the agreements signed and the timetables for their implementation must be honoured. Mutualism and reciprocity, for example, require that Israel act in compliance with all its commitments in the Paris Economic Protocol and Oslo I and II; promptly resume final status talks on all issues (including borders, refugees, water and land rights, settlements, and Jerusalem), in good faith and without preconditions; recommence negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks on the basis of the previously agreed-upon Madrid ground rules; and cease all attempts to change facts on the ground (by such methods as expanding settlements or altering the situation in and around Jerusalem).

It was, after all, in response to these agreements and based on a mutual commitment to those ground rules that several Arab heads of state adopted important confidence-building measures. For such gestures to continue, they should insist that Israel's commitments to mutualism and reciprocity must be reaffirmed.

For example, it was an Arab initiative to ease the secondary boycott on Israel in response to an Israeli commitment to freeze settlements. Since then, some Arab states have even begun to develop direct trade links with Israel. Meanwhile, under the Labour government the settlement population increased by 30 per cent in the past three years. What if the Palestinians were so flagrant in their failure to comply with their commit-

ments? The declaration issued by the forthcoming Arab summit needs to emphasise that, without mutualism and reciprocity, confidence-building steps towards Israel become surer — which is intolerable.

To insist that such commitments be made by Israel is only doing what the US, the co-sponsors of the peace process, have been urging the Arabs to do: "waiting and seeing" and "not prejudging." The Arabs must, indeed, "wait and see" whether the new Israeli government honours its commitments and behaves in a manner consistent with the principles of mutualism and reciprocity. And, until it does, they will "wait and see" regarding future confidence-building measures and normalisation.

The Israeli people, it is said, made a choice. Some say they chose fear over hope. Some say that they chose security and peace on their terms and redressed mutualism and reciprocity, choosing to return to the old paradigm by seeking to maintain all of the gains of the past two or three years (increased recognition, acceptance and trade and the end of the Intifada), while giving little beyond hollow words in return.

Now that Israelis have chosen a new leadership, the Arabs must give that new leadership a choice: mutual peace and security, or a reversal in the peace process from which they have benefited so greatly.

As the Arab leaders present these two alternative paths to the government of Israel, they should rest as-

sured that they have significant allies in their camp — the overwhelming majority of the Arab people who want peace based on justice, the world community that has affirmed the principles of a just and lasting peace, and a substantial body of opinion in Israel (and the US), which will insist that the new Israeli government make the right choice. The Arab heads of state are operating from a position of strength. Peace can continue if they affirm its vision and its principles and define, in unambiguous language, the terms of its engagement. By being firm in their commitment to peace, they will give strength to their allies and those who are committed to a lasting peace.

This is not the time for extraneous debates, counterproductive threats, or the airing of divisive internal petty grievances. This is the moment to accept the challenges of history and to be strong.

Presenting a visionary commitment of a comprehensive peace, insisting that Israel honour its commitments and agree to mutualism and reciprocity, and making Arab-Israeli relations conditional on full compliance with the terms of peace will ensure that this summit will be an historic event. It may well establish that it is the Arabs who occupy the high moral ground.

The writer is president of the Washington-based Arab American Institute.

A minimum of concord

By Naguib Mahfouz

Discussion of the likely ramifications of the results of the Israeli elections, even though not officially on the agenda of the Arab summit, will undoubtedly cast their shadow on proceedings.

It might be difficult for the Arab regimes to sustain a line endorsing a peace process that has been abandoned by Israel, especially that Netanyahu's accession to power will confirm the rejectionist argument that the whole peace process was doomed to failure since its inception. To defeat this argument, the Arab regimes will have to ensure the absence of loopholes within their own ranks. This runs counter to the pre-summit decision to exclude Iraq from the summit and declare beforehand that it will not be invited, a decision that can only reinforce rejectionism and enhance its appeal for the recalcitrant Arab regimes.

The Madrid process was based on the widespread belief among Arab regimes that the Iraqi regime had become their main enemy and on the assumption that the Israeli Labour government was a lesser evil than Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Today, these regimes cannot assume that Saddam is worse than Netanyahu. But bringing Iraq back into the Arab fold is a difficult, if not impossible, task unless Egypt, the only country in the region which maintains contact with all the others, plays an active role in this regard. Nor should it hesitate to do so, for peace, in the final analysis, involves more than ending the confrontation with Israel. It also entails putting an end to the reasons which fuel contradictions among the Arabs themselves and expose their societies to various forms of violence, including the spread of terrorism.

That is why the defusion of the press crisis earlier this week is to be commended as a step in the right direction. For the absence of press freedom means the absence of a forum for democratic debate, the only mechanism which can prevent violent clashes between those who call for pursuing the peace process to its ultimate end and those who see the present developments as validating the rejectionist logic at this critical juncture in the history of the entire region.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmany.

Timely tactics

Al-Shaab: "We are witnessing two great events that revive our hopes... that the clock cannot be turned backwards instead of move forwards — the semi-complete Arab summit and the demise of the infamous [press] Law 93... both at the same time." (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 16 June)

Al-Wafiq: "The Arab summit has other great benefits that were never mentioned — it hastened the dissolution of the Press Syndicate crisis and the trap of Law 93." (Magdi Mehaanah, 17 June)

Al-Ahram: "President Mubarak's historic stance has put the brakes on those who mess around with the nation's welfare. His sense of the sanctity of freedom and the security of the nation is greater to that of any of them. They are a minority that excel only at hypocrisy and harming both the regime and the nation." (Mustafa Bakr, 16 June)

Al-Gomhouria: "Now there are no extremists or moderates in the Press Syndicate, nor governmental or opposition members... journalists are all patriotic Egyptians who want a strong nation, a strong government and a strong opposition. They want press freedom for one and all. Journalism without freedom of expression is no more than dead letters!" (Kamel Zaki, 13 June)

Al-Arabi: "We call upon Arab leaders to take a joint decision to suspend everything until an Arab approved peace is achieved — no normalisation, representative offices or exchange visits with the Israelis. Let this be the decision; the key to clearing the Arab atmosphere... in the face of danger, brothers unite and forget their differences. We do not reject Arab rapprochement — in fact we call for it. Yet Israel is not to be forgotten — Israel... is the real danger which threatens us all." (Diaeddin Dawoud, 17 June)

Al-Shaab: "The Press Syndicate is living its most glorious days. It is no longer confined to defending the freedom of journalists but has become a bastion of defending all freedoms. The resignation of its head and council, along with the General Assembly's strong decisions in combating attempts to impose Law 93, is a good example to all on how to fight for one's rights and not to give in to the aggressive attacks on people's freedoms." (Talal Romi, 16 June)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



President Mubarak's features always remind me, initially at least, of the faces of ancient Egyptians, as recorded in Pharaonic bas reliefs. But this ancient Egyptian element is merely a first impression, one that is almost inevitably followed by an appreciation of those features that are genuinely his, concentrated around the mouth and cheeks but most apparent in Mubarak's smile, a smile that is at once spontaneous and solid.

Close up

Salama A. Salama

Summit shadows

While arrangements for convening a comprehensive Arab summit were being confirmed, hasty attempts were made in certain quarters to calm American and Israeli "fears" and to stress the fact that this summit was not directed against Israel. Indeed some official statements stated baldly that the summit had nothing to do with the fact that the fate of the Middle East peace process, post-Israeli elections, was now in the hands of Netanyahu and his supporters on the Israeli right. King Hussein, returning from his visit to Washington, saw nothing to interfere with a reiteration of his optimism regarding peace in the region.

Within a few hours the summit will have convened. Yet in the run up to the meeting nobody has troubled to allay Arab fears, fears that have been fanned by statements made by both Netanyahu and his supporters concerning the peace process. Neither America nor Israel has taken the trouble to define its current position vis-à-vis the magic formula established by the Madrid peace conference, the "land for peace" formula that underwrote the Oslo and Cairo agreements, the Jordan-Israeli agreement, and which formed the basis of Syrian-Israeli negotiations.

The policies of the Netanyahu government have yet to assume their final shape. They are, in any case, unlikely to be made public until after Netanyahu's coming visit to Washington, where he will meet President Clinton and other US administration officials. These policies will also become clearer in the light of Netanyahu's expected meetings with a number of Arab leaders led by President Mubarak and King Hussein. Only after such meetings will it be possible to determine the intentions of Israel's right wing forces regarding the peace process.

In the meantime, though, certain things are clear. Under Netanyahu, Israel's management of the "peace battle" will undergo a radical transformation, not least through the new prime minister's emphasis on the absolute priority given to the Israeli concept of security, a priority that might eventually lead to freezing the final phase of negotiations with the Palestinians, a refusal to return the Golan Heights, and — here I might be being optimistic — an insistence on maintaining the status quo in Jerusalem.

It is not particularly constructive, at this juncture, to pay too much attention to an assessment of Netanyahu's own options. Rather, our concern should be focused on the options with which the Arab summit will deal and the choices it will make, so as to deny Israel the ability to benefit from inter-Arab disputes. Attempts by Israel to play Arab countries one against the other must be systematically foiled. There are many indications that Netanyahu's foreign policy will follow the old colonialist tactic of divide and rule, successfully implemented on occasion by Peres with the backing of the US.

The problem now, of course, is that for the next few months, as domestic considerations come to dominate the agenda in Washington, the US administration is unlikely to be in a position to exert any pressure on Netanyahu. Therefore, the role of "honest broker" will be governed during the coming period by domestic US considerations on the one hand, and by the Arabs' ability to unify their ranks, on the other.

The danger is that during the next phase the entire Middle East will enter a grey period. The shadows will be darkest, however, if the summit fails to achieve a minimum of sincere understanding as to how to deal with the extreme right-wing Likud and its concept of peace.



No longer the promised land

Israel is changing. The concept of a purely Jewish state has not been realised, and the dream of a promised land has been relinquished. Yet this, writes Qadri Hefni, is only the beginning

Since the foundation of Israel, Israelis have had to contend with two successive problems connected with national identity. The first was the relationship between Jewish and Israeli identities; this has been replaced, today, by the relationship between Zionism and Israeli identity. These sources of identity — Judaism, Zionism and Israeli nationality — concur upon the legitimacy of the state of Israel. Differences arise, however, over the conceptual foundations of the state: its relationship with Jewish history, with its non-Jewish inhabitants, Jews elsewhere in the world, neighbouring countries, the international community.

The roots of the problem of the relationship between Israel and Judaism predate the founding of Israel, and can be found in the very origins of Zionist ideology, and the prevalence of secular Zionism over the teachings of religious Talmudic Jews.

The fact that the creation of Israel was the product of a predominantly secular movement did not quell other religious trends. On the contrary, the struggle between religion and the state is still very much alive. Israel has managed to accommodate this reality. The conflict between national and religious identity in Israel has never been so profound as to threaten the existence of the state. Rather, the conflict as it stands pertains to the nature of the government within a country, the existence and "mobile" borders of which neither party has called into question. It would also appear that the conflict between state and religion in Israel is part of the worldwide conflict between secularism and religious fundamentalism.

Finally, and more importantly, there has been no practical cause to clearly distinguish between the interests of Israeli and non-Israeli Jews throughout the "no war-no peace" period, which culminated with the Israeli victory in 1967.

The conflict between state and religion, therefore, implies the acceptance of certain prerequisites for the full realisation of the Zionist dream. These are: the total Zionisation of all Jews and the end of any Jewish rejection of Zionism; the end of the Diaspora and the gathering of all Jews in Israel; the achievement of ethnic purity within the Jewish state and the removal of the Palestinian population; Jewish cohesion and homogeneity through the elimination of ethnic discrimination among Jews; and finally, the alignment of the state's political boundaries with the boundaries defined by scripture: "from the Nile to the Euphrates".

Of these prerequisites, the only one to have been fulfilled, at least in part, is the last, as a result of the 1967 War.

This achievement in itself brought to the fore a problem which, until then, had been latent in the discussions of various Zionist conferences: "Who is leading whom?" Is the leadership of Israel to be vested in the Jews of Israel, the inhabitants of the state that won the victory of 1967? Or in the Jews of the Diaspora, by virtue of their greater numbers and wealth? In the event of the former, Israel becomes the ultimate authority for the rest of the Jews in the world. In the latter case, the in-

ternational Zionist movement remains the higher source of authority.

A heated debate continues over this issue in Israel, which may come as a surprise to many in the Arab world, who still tend to believe that the Zionism founded at the beginning of this century is as powerful in Israel as it once was. Zionist Jews in the US still cling to Zionism as the most appropriate framework to mobilise an effective lobby that suits their interests in the US. On the other hand, it is sufficient to observe the conflict in Israel over the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements and the controversy, in the run-up to the elections, over the recent wave of bombings, in order to note that "Zionism" and any reference to Jews of the Diaspora have no place whatsoever in the bickering and back-biting prevalent among Israel's politicians today.

How can we explain this transition in the relationship between the Zionist movement and Israel? Has Israel really undergone a major transformation? Or has Zionism taken a strategic turn?

The expression "Zionist state" is clearly a contradiction in terms. It is absolutely impossible for a pre-conceived ideology — in this instance, Zionism — to conform with the tangible manifestations of statehood. In this, Israel is no exception to the rule that governs all forms of "doctrinal" states. No sooner was the state of Israel formed than the contradiction began to manifest itself: the state represents primarily the interests of the Jews of Israel, while the Zionist organisation represents the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly in the US. If both sides have been able to transcend the theoretical contradiction in practice, it is because they have reached a certain concordance (not conformity) with regard to their respective interests.

Is this concordance anything new? There has been a real change in the interests of the US, and of US Jews. There has also been a change in the economic interests of Israel, as represented by its citizens.

In contemplating this change, one must take into account the considerable extent to which American and Israeli interests in the region overlap. When we speak of change in the interests of both sides, this is not at all to suggest that an area of shared interests no longer exists. Rather, the issue is whether this area increases or decreases, and to what extent.

In this context, I must caution against two potential pitfalls. The first is the tendency among Arabs to perceive Israel as little more than a tool planted in the region to serve American interests. The danger of this idea is that it strips Israel of any independence as an autonomous entity. This is both incompatible with the facts and counter to Arab interest.

The second, almost the reverse of the first, is the tendency to perceive Israel, or more precisely the Jews of Israel, as the agency that steers the course of US policy by virtue of their control over Jews in the US, who in turn control the American economy, politics and press. The error in this perception is two-fold. First, it equates American Jews with Israeli Jews in spite of the

discrepancy in their respective economic and social realities. Second, it divests the US of its autonomous dynamic, which is also incompatible with the facts and counter to Arab interests.

This said, we can proceed to observe the change that has occurred on both sides. With respect to the US, Israel's importance to American interests in the area reached its height during the period of the Cold War and the no-war-no peace situation. One can perhaps sum up the aim of American strategy during that period as "control of the region via Israel." In the wake of subsequent events — the 1973 War, the Camp David accords, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War — one can now sum up the new American objective as "control of the region, including Israel." The era when the US needed Israel to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor, for example, is over. Now the US can do this, and more — destroy Iraq in its entirety and rebuild Kuwait — with no need whatsoever to rely on Israel.

As for Israel itself, changes have taken place on four fronts. The first pertains to the composition of the Jewish population of Israel, notably the steady rise in the proportion of Sabras (Jews born in Israel). According to the 1993 census, 60.7 per cent of the Jews in Israel are Sabras. This means, simply, that the majority of Jews in Israel now lack that dual historical experience which characterised the generation that founded the Israeli state. The majority of Jews in Israel no longer share those memories of Nazi oppression that constituted a strong psychological bond between the Jews of Israel and the Jews of Europe. In Israel, there is a new demographic reality. Most of its inhabitants have only experienced "Israeli history". They cannot find within themselves the memories of Jewish suffering which fired the enthusiasm of the Holocaust generation. This applies even to adults, given the increasing proportions of immigrants from Asia, Africa and, more recently, the former Soviet Union.

The second change pertains to Palestine. From 1948 to 1967, Arab political discourse was based on the slogan "the liberation of the whole of Palestine," understood to be the task of all the Arab countries. After 1967, the slogan became "eliminating the effects of Israeli aggression," i.e. returning to the pre-1967 borders. It was only natural that the Palestinians reassess their calculations accordingly. Henceforth, the Palestinians would be directly responsible for solving their own problems. The Palestinians defeated in 1948, too, got the message. They could no longer pin their aspirations on the hope that Arab armies would liberate Palestine one day. In practical terms, this attitude excluded these Arabs from the general arena of politics in Israel and continued to compel others to leave. It soon became apparent, however, that the only recourse was to seek to operate within the context of the a "democratic state" — a government for all citizens. As the very antithesis of Zionism, this posed a true quandary for the Israeli government, which has consistently boasted its adherence to the principles of Western democracy.

The third change pertains to the reserves of Jewish migration from abroad. The "Law of Return" was the practical culmination of the Zionist dream to draw all the Jews from the Diaspora to settle in the nascent state. Gradually, the dream evaporated, against the forces that govern all human migrations from areas of repulsion to areas of attraction, from poverty to wealth, from oppression to security. Israel was not the oasis of prosperity and security for all Jews of the world it set itself up as. Israel manages to attract only a minuscule proportion of Jews from around the world.

The fourth area of change involves the current political peace process, the essence of which rests on two essential and interrelated points. First, it means abandoning the notion of a "Greater Israel" and all historical, religious and ideological doctrine which holds that the West Bank and Gaza are an integral part of the land of Israel.

This, however, does not automatically mean abandoning so-called security exigencies that can be used in negotiations as justification for continued Israeli presence in those areas, on a permanent or a temporary basis. Second, it means abandoning the notion of the "unity of Palestinian national land" and all the historical, religious and ideological doctrine which views Israel in its entirety as an interloper on Palestinian territory. This, in turn, does not at all imply that Palestinian identity must be forgone.

Careful consideration of these two points is sufficient to highlight that the price Israel must pay for peace involves abandoning one of the fundamental principles of Zionism: the concept of the promised land. Palestinians have long been deprived of their hopes of liberating the whole of Palestine, and are now asked to make a settlement tantamount to relinquishing their dream altogether. The Israeli Zionists, on the other hand, in fact achieved a major portion of the Zionist dream when, in June 1967, they occupied all of Palestine as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai. Suddenly, with the October war of 1973, this reality was shaken. With the return of the Sinai to Egypt in 1982, it began to diminish. And now Israel is in the process of negotiating over territories that by all reckoning lie within the core of the Zionist dream's promised land.

It is impossible to conceive that Zionism can continue to exist if it lacks its traditional components, no matter how it tries to change its guise. But does the weakening of Zionism ultimately mean the end of Israel's hostility toward the Arabs, in that this was fundamental to the concept of Zionism? The answer is not so simple. A quick look at the imminent problem over water resources in the region, the reality of Israel's nuclear arsenal, international pressures to forcibly merge Israel into the region — all of these are sufficient to keep the hostility between Israel and the Arabs alive. This hostility, however, is being governed by new realities, which require the formulation of a new strategy.

The writer is professor of psychology at Ain Shams University and an expert on Israeli and Zionist affairs.

To The Editor

Niqab controversy

Sir—Regarding the controversy over the *niqab*, I wish to say that, in spite of her assurances to the contrary, it is people like Umm Saladin (Letters to the editor, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June), who do not tolerate the new discourse advocated by Ismail Serageldin and Mohamed Emara.

In her last paragraph, she writes that she will be happy to provide readers with evidence of her position in favour of the *niqab*. Whatever evidence she may provide, it will neither be from the Qu'ran, nor from the *hadith saheeh*, so I cannot imagine what more authoritative arguments she can offer us.

Her tolerance, she says, stops short of "inaccurate history". I am afraid that she is the one who brings us inaccurate history to support her claim, or more precisely, an inaccurate interpretation of history.

If the *niqab* was worn at different times and in numerous countries, which no one can deny, that certainly does not mean that it was worn in keeping with religious precepts based on the Qu'ran. Until well past the Middle Ages in Europe, women wore a headress much like the *hijab* we see today. In Mediterranean, South American and Asian countries, women, especially peasants, still wear scarves as part of their dress. This does not have any religious connotations.

Of course political and social trends can dictate fashion. If Umm Saladin has ever watched Egyptian films from the 1930s through the 1970s, or if she has seen any one of the concerts of Umm Kulthum, she will have noticed no *hijabs*, and certainly no *niqabs* in the audience. Could it be that the eminent theologians of the time, like Sheikh Shatout, or Sheikh El-Manaqhi, who both headed Al-Azhar, did not understand the precepts of Islam? Could it be perhaps that their Arabic was not as good as that of Umm Saladin? She does tell

us that it was her increased knowledge of the language that induced her to go from the *hijab* to the *niqab*.

I don't know who Umm Saladin's friends are, but I can cite off-hand dozens of Egyptian women in all walks of life who do not wear a *niqab*, and whose strength certainly does not come from a pretty face or figure, but from real intellectual and moral value, education and dedication to their jobs and families. There are also the millions of Muslim women in the fields, factories, offices, banks, you name it, who contribute to the development of their countries, and who do not derive their strength from the way they look, or dress.

What Umm Saladin writes is dangerous and misleading, because it deliberately falsifies history, relies on controversial writings, has no basis in the Qu'ran, and contributes to racism and fanaticism, because it sets Muslim women against one another, and certainly against their countrywomen of other religious beliefs. As Alexander Pope so aptly put it, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread".

Djeanane Kamil
Madi
Cairo

Ignored heritage

Sir—In your front page article entitled "Culture for the masses", (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June), Rania Khalaf stressed calls for Mrs Mubarak to sponsor a campaign for the preservation of Islamic Cairo. Highlighting the contribution of prominent Islamic figures to Islamic civilization has been included in a campaign for enlightenment. No doubt, cultural and youth centres will take part in fulfilling these basic objectives.

I wonder why Coptic culture is completely ignored. Isn't Coptic heritage one of the main es-

pects of Egyptian history? It is a sacred mission for the Higher Council for Antiquities to give due care to Coptic monuments. It is an essence of Egypt, sorrowfully but intentionally pushed out of the limelight.

References are available and specialists are ready to share, but those who are concerned turn a deaf ear. Mere slogans are shouted, but reality is something else. It should be taken into consideration that stressing the value of culture necessitates objectivity and honesty.

Zarif Kamel Hakim
English language teacher
El-Daher Secondary School for Girls
Cairo

Summit for solidarity

Sir—I decided to write to you as soon as I read the lead article in your paper last week ("It takes two to tango", *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 13-19 June) on the upcoming Arab summit in Cairo. This summit, as officials declared, aims at two things: regaining Arab unity and supporting the peace process.

News of the summit were met with gratification in the Arab world — a reminder of what we can achieve when we unite, such as the '73 October War.

I write to you to welcome this summit. It is sad, however, that Iraq was not invited to attend, especially as it is a heavyweight Arab country. One can only hope that the summit would be a chance for the whole Arab world to unite and begin a new era, regardless of all the previous problems among some of its countries. When Arabs unite, they become a power to contend with not only in the region, but also worldwide.

Mohamed Fathy Mohamed
Suez Canal University
Ismailia

Summer summits

By Salah Montasser

The last comprehensive Arab summit was convened in Cairo on 10 August 1990, following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. In the very same conference hall where the Arab leaders will meet tomorrow, President Mubarak had told the leaders gathered six years ago: "The choice facing us is clear — an effective Arab position that safeguards Arab interests and preserves both Iraq and Kuwait, or a foreign intervention over which we have no say and no control and which will have no interest in preserving the Arabs' existence and their rights. Our guidelines will be the aims and wishes of the powers that support it."

Unfortunately, that summit failed to reach a united and positive stand and left the door open to foreign intervention which, as Hosni Mubarak had predicted, subjected the issue and its solution to its own interests.

The question now is: is the situation today any different from what it was six years ago? At this meeting, photographs of accolades and reconciliation, carried around the world by satellite, are not enough. It is far more important for the Arab leaders to work out the interests of the Arab nation in its confrontation with Israel, which has the definite impression that it has succeeded in splitting the Arab front. It believes that the Arabs have been broken up and scattered, and that it is now easy to deal with each country individually, to the extent that some Arab states are concerned with creating firmer ties with Israel at the expense of inter-Arab relations.

What concerns the Arab nation is whether peace can become a just peace in the true sense, and how to restore Israel's respect for the Arabs, thereby dispelling its illusions that it remains unchallenged in its regional dominance. The Arabs must also establish the best way to assist Syria, Palestine and Lebanon in their confrontation with Israel, and to solve the Arabs' differences — once internal, but now internationalised to such an extent that their resolution is no longer up to the Arabs themselves.

The leaders meeting tomorrow should also search for means to instill new self-confidence in their people. These are some of the main issues which, if not resolved, will allow Israel to dominate the region and Netanyahu to secure undisputed supremacy in the Middle East.

Magdi Mehanna



A woman of infinite variety

Injy El-Kashef remembers Zuzu Nabil, actress and enchantress

THE VOICE and eyes are unlikely ever to be forgotten. Addicts of *Al'Lella Wa Leila* (*A Thousand And One Nights*) heard her stories for over 20 years, during which Sheherazade always lived till the next day to tell more. But her stories failed to help her survive her illness, and she is gone now. Aziza Imam, known as Zuzu Nabil, passed away on 12 June, leaving behind awards and certificates of merit, the last of which was presented during the Festival of Narrative-Films only a week before her death. On that particular occasion she was being honoured for her pioneering role in the Egyptian cinema. Performing in over 50 films, she was one of the foremost and best actresses of her generation.

Zuzu Nabil began her career with the Mukhtar Osman troupe, achieving success in the 1936 production Dr Yulu. When, six months later, the troupe went bankrupt, she joined forces with Youseff Wahbi, the leading theatrical impresario of the time. In 1946, with the release of *El-Khamasa Guiney*, her

popularity as a screen actress was confirmed. She was equally at home in classical stage roles, in modern screen dramas, switching with aplomb between colloquial and classical idioms.

Zuzu Nabil never limited herself to one particular area. On stage, on the airwaves, before the cameras, she was, almost inevitably, the centre of attention. Always a strong personality, she was the first woman director of the Popular Theatre, a teacher of elevation at the Cinema Institute and one of the first women in Egypt to produce films.

Her charisma and uncontrollable genius aside, whatever the medium, what is now left of Zuzu Nabil is her public's love and respect. Sheherazade's voice with every Ramadan, and her unforgettable eyes.

Aziza Imam (Zuzu Nabil), actress, born 1920, Sayed Zeinab, died 13 June, 1996.

Horns on the highway

David Blake travels the soundwaves with uncle

Cairo Symphony Orchestra: Favourites (7); Carl Maria Von Weber: Der Freischütz; Mozart: Concerto in C major for flute, harp and orchestra; Imas Abdel-Dayem (flute) and Isabelle Courte (harp); Rimsky Korsakov: Spanish Caprice, Op. 34; F. Liszt: Les Préludes; Youssef El-Sisi, conductor; Main Hall, Cairo Opera House; 13 June

Favourites seven. Loose holiday festal atmosphere with, unfortunately, nothing unseemly. The opening piece, the overture to *Der Freischütz*, was if anything too loose too laid back. Not slow but underdeveloped. This is very great Weberian harbinger of the Romantic upheaval of the 19th century. The opera travels fast through the land of demons and angels and ends with one of those rousing Weberian tunes brought directly from heaven. The horns and brass which open the overture were ragged, recovering too late to bring the gallop of horses from the valleys of thunder and lightning. This music does demand a certain madness and grandeur to give it that extra dimension which was missing.

A certain kind of revelation came with exciting force in the next favourite, Mozart's C major concerto for flute, harp and orchestra. No words fit the music, only attempts. C major is a very special key. The end of Wagner's *Die Walküre*. Beethoven's 7th symphony and some Bachian resolutions are all C major events. No criticism is in order for this performance — merely thanks for pleasures and visions presented.

The two artists, Imas Abdel-Dayem and Isabelle Courte, were made to perform this work. They become one, though

each is different. Courte, looking angelic, played so. Energy, flying fingers, endless varieties of tone and speed, with no effort shown. She seems, like her partner, to become the instrument she plays. Golden arcs of sound span over the theatre. Her pianissimi were delicate, disembodied and clearly audible. But most of all the understanding of the music was complete. Could a harp ever sound more alive, noble and beautiful?

As for Abdel-Dayem, her art defies description. There is satisfaction even in watching her prepare to play. Imposing, the Brumhilde of the flute, harmonious, gracious and highly tempered. She conquers before she begins. Then it comes: the phrasing is quite imitable — so right, pure, with not a trace of mannerism.

Mozart's message and the flow of wit demands splash from the instrument and a disregard of all difficulties. Abdel-Dayem positively lets fly one of Mozart's rapturous hymns to sound. And with these two great artists the other Mozarrian message — the evanescentness of all things earthly — is exactly caught.

What came after stood up bravely to these two artists. Firstly, the Rimsky Korsakov *Spanish Caprice*, a party piece, like *Scheherazade*, but without the slicing off of the heads.

All evening the Cairo Symphony had done well enough, but was not up to its highest standard. El-Sisi is a very visual maestro. Apparently he does not do much. He has no tricks, his technique is clear and pointed and his arms are elegantly designed to achieve much with

little. He is urbane, almost airborne. He pays respects to an audience, but goes no further. He is no prude, however: an implied wink to the side shows he knows it all, the scene, dark and light, and the world. Such urbanity presupposes restraint, line, savviness and a conception tailored to fit the model. At times, more is expected of him. He can let loose and allow the orchestra to buzz, but on this night the urbanity stole away the filling and we were left with the dressing. This style is perfectly suited to Kurt Weill's music and an El-Sisi night at the opera would be a blotched show is another Liszt mystery. He wrote it along with other works between 1848 and 1878.

There is repetitive, bald, over-blown and over-composed. Of anything it has nothing. What he himself thought of it no one knows, but what Wagner, who loved him, thought of it is on record: kitsch. And Liszt's search, totally sincere all his life, was for the new and the improved.

Les Préludes is like a creaking old kitchen cupboard with no food inside. What El-Sisi thinks of it is conjectural. There are many hom passages. The Cairo Symphony scrambled them quite well. The first violin, who had done wonders earlier to keep Weill lively, did some instant running repairs on the long string passages of *Les Préludes* which needed the vibrancy they alone could give.

The love of Liszt's life, Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein, who battled the Pope and her own brother the Czar of Russia to allow her to legitimise her union with Liszt, said: "He has hurried his dance much further into the future than Wagner." What she of all people thought of this broken reed is not known.

Mozart and Weber belonged to a past Liszt had long left behind. A pity such a festive concert could not have given something of Liszt the prophet. As it was, we were left with him waltzing on the grave.

Theatre

In view of the wide and far-reaching popularity of Indian films in Egypt, not to mention the long historical ties between the two nations, it is quite amazing how little the ordinary Egyptian theatre-goer knows about Indian drama. A few years ago, when Indian film star Amitabh Bachchan arrived in Cairo for the International Film Festival, he was mobbed in his hotel by hordes of screaming fans. One of them, so overcome with emotion, tore off her veil and promptly fainted. Those young people could easily reel off the full list of Bachchan's films and glibly converse about them: but, like popping the name Rabindranath Tagore at any theatre audience and they would look at you blankly, with wide, innocent eyes. "Isn't he some sort of poet?" is probably the best answer you could hope for.

In the sixties Tagore was better known in Egypt. India's celebration of the centenary of his birth in 1961 had its repercussions here. Numerous articles in the press focused on the life of the man and his work. In most of these, however, the accent fell heavily and almost exclusively on his poetry — understandably, perhaps, since it was a book of poems (*Gitanjali* or *An Offering of Songs*, as the poet himself called it in English) which won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. If his dramatic works (which number over fifty and span a period of almost 60 years) got any mention at all, it was usually cursory and admiring. In these days, when literary translation was booming and theatre offered a wide-ranging miscellany of texts, one would have expected Arabic versions of at least some of Tagore's plays, and even a production. Unfortunately, only one play, *The Post Office* (Dakshin, 1913) was translated into Arabic, though the project to produce it at the Pocket Theatre soon evaporated.

Took 35 years since interest in Tagore began to bring one of his plays to the Egyptian stage. Not surprisingly, it was a young, newly formed experimental group who accomplished this

Bitter carnival

Nehad Selaiha applauds the first production of a Tagore play in Egypt

feet. Last week, at the permanent home of *Al-Ghad* ('Tomorrow') Theatre Company, a newly built elegant chamber theatre, adjacent to The Balloon, Tagore's *Raja* (or *The King of the Dark Chamber*, 1910) opened. Like most of the great poet's well known plays, it is a difficult, challenging text, heavily weighted with symbolism. Like his great Irish contemporary and fellow Nobel-Prize-winner, William Butler Yeats (whose plays are fate with a similar neglect in Egypt), Tagore strove after an original and authentic dramatic mode that could accommodate the lyrical and mystical side by side with the dramatic, incorporate song, dance and mime as organic elements, and above all, dramatise the 'activity of the souls of the characters', in Yeats's words, and 'the rushing journey of the soul'.

Curiously, at about the same point in their careers, both poets developed an intense interest in music, movement and ritual; the result, in each case, was a series of symbolic dance dramas, or 'plays for dancers' as Yeats chose to call them. In this area, however, Tagore was at an advantage: while Yeats restricted himself to the style of the fourteenth-century Japanese Noh drama he discovered in 1916 (combining it with various Christian and other supernatural themes in verse plays like *The Dreaming of the Bones* (1919), *Calvary* (1920), *The Cat and the Moon* (1926) and *The Resurrection* (1934), among others, Tagore had a vast store of indigenous forms of theatre and a long tradition of Sanskrit classical drama and Bengali folk-drama on which to draw. Unlike Yeats, he did not have to struggle against the conventions of Western-style picture-frame staging and could freely choose whatever aspect of Western drama suited his work.

Chitrangada (1936), a re-

working of an earlier verse drama called *Chitra* (1892) is, perhaps, Tagore's best-known dance drama. Its central theme is the meaning of physical and spiritual beauty in the relationship between man and woman. The same theme informs *The King of the Dark Chamber*, written some 18 years after *Chitra*. The recurrence of the theme at different stages of Tagore's life reveals an intense, life-long preoccupation with it. This is not surprising in a man who was also a philosopher, who called the educational institution he founded (in 1901) the 'abode of peace' (*Shanti Niketan*), who lived ascetically and celebrated his way of life in a play called *The Ascetic* (*Sanyasi*), and who as early as 1890, when he was only 29, portrayed sacrifice, in a play that bears this name, as a ritual propitiation, and 'the rushing journey of the soul'.

In *The King of the Dark Chamber* the questioning of the true meaning of beauty acquires a pronounced mystical dimension, achieved through a deliberate and systematic subversion of our traditional notions of light and darkness. All the elements of the drama — the lively, suspenseful plot, the bustling action, the intrigue, the songs, the carnival that turns bitter and the many role-reversals — move in the same direction, and the final message is unmissable: true beauty cannot be found in the outward shows of this world, in the deceptive play of light and shadow; it has to be sought at the heart of darkness.

Migahid's interpretation and many alterations are bound to arouse a lot of controversy. Some will say that the play has gained in focus, concentration and spiritual impact because of them; others may judge that they have adulterated Tagore's vision and twisted it out of all recognition. Few, however, will dispute the technical proficiency of the production. In this respect, the flexible seating arrangement of Al-

Ghad Theatre and the audience's comfortable swivel-chairs were an asset. You can seat the audience anywhere you like and set up your performance areas or areas, wherever you choose. It is a free space, capable of being shaped and reshaped infinitely without losing the virtue of intimacy. Such a free space was crucial for a performance that required bare platforms, multiple settings, the minimum of highly symbolic props and, above all, room for movement.

For this production director Migahid chose to seat his audience on the two long sides of the triangular hall, creating a kind of traverse theatre. On either end of the hall were raised platforms, fitted with minimal symbolic scenery, representing several locales. In the middle passage way, traversing the area between the audience's seats, a black lienzum square representing the king's dark chamber, and edged with burning white light gave way to an empty, unlocated area that signified the crossing of all borders — physical and spiritual. The acting was generally good and highly disciplined, but could have done with a touch of stylisation. The weakest point in this respect was Samia Wahid's performance of the crucial part of the clown who masquerades as the king in the early carnival scenes; his antics were belaboured and heavy-handed, and at times it felt as if he was bludgeoning us into laughter. Another feeble element was the choreography of the dances, which was lacklustre and embarrassingly naive. But the most damaging element of all was the music: Walid El-Shahwi's recorded score, though good in itself, was eight years removed from the atmosphere of the play. A few percussion instruments, played live, would have done the job more efficiently. Still, on balance, the rewards of the evening far outnumbered its disappointments. At the very least Tagore has finally been added to the repertory of the Egyptian theatre.

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Listings

EXHIBITIONS

French Biennale
Arts Centre, 1 El-Mashad El-Horreya St, Zamalek, Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri, 10am-1pm & 7pm.

Les Minotaures I (1933), directed by R. Bernard and starring Florelle.

Les Minotaures II, as above, 7pm.

Yousri Nasrallah (Paintings)

Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 18 Sidi Merwali St, near El-Attarin, Alexandria. Tel 482 1598. Daily 9am-10pm. Until 20 June.

Slovenian Graphics

Al-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 26 June.

A selection of works by some of the most significant representatives of the Slovene graphic art.

Group Exhibition (Paintings)

Cairo Society Gallery, 17 Yusuf El-Guindi St, Bob El-Louk, Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun 12pm-8pm. Until 27 June.

The students of the Cairo Academy, Faculty of Fine Arts, exhibit their work under the title "Old Cairo".

Maged Abdelsak & Fahmy Odeh

Al-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 27 June.

Barbara Graf & Sadie Niebergall

Al-Hanager, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily 10am-10pm. Until 27 June.

Commercial cinemas change every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas.

MRI Film

Biselli II, 26th July St, Downtown, Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 8pm & 10pm. Cinema 1.

Open House, Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 342 4825. Daily 1pm-10pm. Until 27 June.

Photographic exhibition under the title "Alexandria 3x3".

Jihad Raouf, Sameh El-Babany & Lekha Zakaria

Khan El-Masrafi Gallery, 18 Sidi Merwali St, near El-Attarin, Alexandria. Tel 482 1598. Daily 9am-9pm. Until 27 June.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil

1 Khan El-Masrafi, Tel 336 276. Daily 1pm, 3pm & 5pm.

Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil, including works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Monet and Rodin.

Egyptian Museum

Tahrir Sq, Downtown, Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 1pm-3pm, Fri 9am-11.30am & 1pm-3pm.

Outstanding collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures and the controversial mummies room.

Coptic Museum

Mar Girgis, Old Cairo, Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.

Founded in 1910, the museum houses the largest collection of Coptic art and artefacts in the world.

Islamic Museum

Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bob El-Khalil, Tel 390 92100-1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm & 5pm.

A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including marble, lustreware, ceramics, textiles, woodwork and coins, down from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluke periods and other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art

Opera House Grounds, Gezira, Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-5pm.

A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners.

El-Louangi (The Warden)

Lida, 23 Emadoddin St, Downtown, Tel 574 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

With Fifi Abdou and El-Shabot Makrouk.

America Shikha Bilt

Normandy (outdoors), 31 El-Alamein St, Helipolis, Tel 258 0234. Daily 8pm.

Dina Juan de Marcos

Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki, Tel 334 4017. Daily 8pm. Miami, 38 Tahrir, Dokki, Tel 356 5656. Daily noon, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 8.30pm.

El-Louangi (The Warden)

Lida, 23 Emadoddin St, Downtown, Tel 574 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

Spirit of place: to coincide with this week's Durrell conference Hala Halim examines the precarious future of the house once occupied by Durrell, while Hoda El-Sadda reviews a critical study on the Personal Landscape poets

Deconstructing monuments

Hala Halim traces the twists of fate that obscure the future of the houses where Lawrence Durrell and Effat Nagui once lived

Ten months after a large-scale campaign for the preservation of two houses in Alexandria that bear witness to the city's social and cultural history, signs of official interest remain promising, though no more than that.

The threat of demolition posed to much of Alexandria's architectural heritage is all the more reprehensible in the case of the property that once belonged to the Ambrosi, an Italian Alexandrian family. In addition to the wider, cultural significance of the two buildings the main Ambroni mansion housed, during the second world war, British novelist Lawrence Durrell (1912-1990), while the atelier in the garden was for her last 30 years the residence of artist Effat Nagui (1905-1994).

In May 1995 the Ambroini heirs sold the property on 19 Al-Mamoun Street to a construction company, *Al-Sharika Al-Arabiyya Li-Istihmarat Al-Qasr*. Given its location in the once smart, notably Jewish, but now popular quarter of Muhammara Bay, the large property was a potentially lucrative investment, providing sufficient land for the construction of residential tower blocks.

In this and similar cases in Alexandria the impediment that faces constructors is the decree issued a few years ago by the governorate, prohibiting the demolition of villas as well as buildings of historical distinction, an impediment construction companies circumvent by illegal demolition late at night, ensuring whenever possible that what remains of the structure the following morning will be beyond restoration. After the fact, the measure fails to breach the law is settled and construction begins.

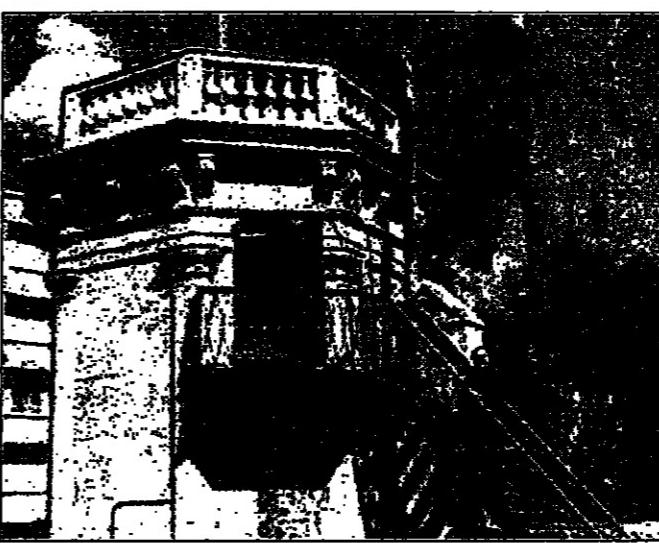
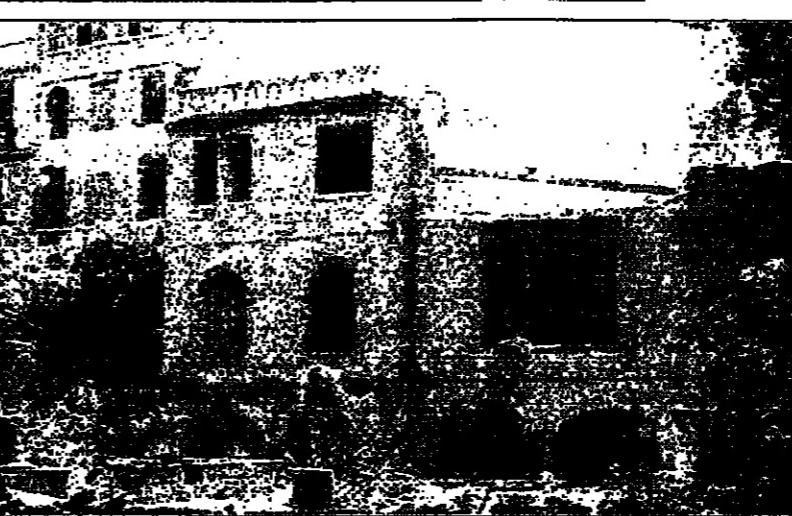
This pattern would have been repeated with the ex-Ambroni property had it not been for the presence of antiquities in the garden. But by the time the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) placed the property under its temporary guardianship last August, the roof and part of the upper storey of the Effat Nagui atelier had been demolished and the marble balustrade of the main staircase to the mansion vandalised. Meanwhile, a campaign for the preservation of the ex-Ambroni property was spearheaded by a number of non-governmental organisations through letters of appeal sent to the president's office and various ministries.

The campaigners involved were Mohamed Awad of the Alexandria Preservation Trust, Adel Abu Zahra of the Friends of the Environment Association and Nawal Hassan of the Centre for Studies of Egyptian Civilization, as well as individuals acting on their own initiative. The work of the NGOs was paralleled by a media campaign, both locally and internationally. But while the ministries of culture and tourism responded by dispatching committees to look into the matter, the SCA had removed most of the antiquities, leaving the premises unguarded—an ironical move, in view of the fact that the SCA is an organ of the Ministry of Culture.

While SCA guards were on the premises, Ali Abu Zeid Ibrahim, chairman of the board of the construction company stated that there were no demolition plans, that in fact his company intended to turn the two houses into schools. The lawyer of the company, Habib Khairi, after the departure of the SCA guards asserted that the main Ambroni mansion would be turned into the company's headquarters while the Effat Nagui atelier and surrounding structures like the garage would be demolished and replaced by a number of residential towers with an inner courtyard accommodating part of the garden.

Books

Dexterously disentangled



Top, clockwise: the atelier in the garden of the Ambroni mansion, where Effat Nagui worked (photo courtesy of Asmaa El-Bakri); Durrell climbs the steps of the tower (photo courtesy of Manos Haritatos). Clea Badaro's portrait of Durrell, loaned by Mohamed Awad, which will be exhibited at the Cecil Hotel

Throughout, the company flatly denied responsibility for the demolished roof of the atelier, claiming that it was already in a dilapidated condition when purchased. Their claims are thrown into question by Onsi Nagui, Effat's nephew, who testifies that the house was in habitable condition when his aunt died. Furthermore, officials at Alexandria's Central District, under whose jurisdiction the property falls, have confirmed that the company has twice been fined for illegal demolition.

The past few decades have seen a transition in cultural identity, one that makes it necessary when calling for the preservation of edifices of cosmopolitan Egypt to restore to them their associations. It is this rift, compounded by the dearth, at least in Arabic, of documentation on cosmopolitan Alexandria's social and cultural history, that allowed the construction company's lawyer to claim that Durrell's tenancy of the Ambroni mansion was no more than a figment of local folklore.

His argument was based on the assertion that Durrell, being British, could not possibly have resided in the "house of an Italian family during the second world war". This reasoning does not hold. The full name of Durrell's Italian landlord was Aldo Ambroini Abramo Isaac. The Ambrosi were Sephardic Jews.

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"A step in the right direction", seems to be the consensus on the new unified child code, whose executive bill is to be issued soon. Although children under the age of 18 constitute 40 per cent of the population, Dina Ezzat finds out that a lot still needs to be done before children's rights are fully protected



photo: Ayman Ibrahim



photo: Salih Ibrahim



photo: Khaled El-Fiqi



photo: Salih Ibrahim

Little steps

The progress of a nation is measured by the quality of life given to its children. In a country like Egypt, where children under the age of 18 constitute 40 per cent of the population, improving the quality of life for the young is imperative to sustainable development.

Egypt has made great strides in reducing child mortality and malnutrition, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). But there is a lot of room for improvement in other areas; hence a national unified law on children's rights will soon be on the books.

The executive bill for the unified child code is currently being drafted by the Cabinet. Once issued, it will implement Egypt's new legislation on child rights.

The new legislation contains nine chapters encompassing the areas of education, healthcare, social services and legal rights. In theory, its 144 articles should improve the lives of some 25 million girls and boys from the day they are born until they turn 18.

Reactions to the new child code have varied widely. Some have called it a landmark on the road to improving children's living conditions. Others have dismissed it as an unnecessary rewrite of the 1,200 current legislative texts on children. But most commentators seem to agree that it is a step in the right direction "which cannot stand on its own".

"There are three main objectives for this law — the child's well-being, development and protection," said Amna El-Guindi, secretary-general of the Council for Motherhood and Childhood, one of the supporters of the new legislation.

According to its supporters, the legislation breaks new ground in several domains. It raises the legal age of childhood from 16 to 18 and the legal minimum age for child labour from 12 to 14. It also maintains that every child enrolled in school should have a medical record and prohibits the physical punishment of any child under 18 who is charged with committing a crime. And it stipulates tough penalties for factory owners who breach the international standards of children's food.

But those who were not too impressed say that the new law steers clear of controversial issues and thus fails to address the acute problems from which thousands of children suffer every day.

For example, while over 30 per cent of the estimated 6 million physically handicapped children in the country were deformed due to hereditary diseases, the new code fails to mention them. A proposed article that required all men and women to undergo pre-marital medical testing, to avoid exacerbating the problem, was scrapped during the parliamentary discussion of the draft legislation.

"Parliament was completely against this article," said Fathi Naguib, senior consultant to the Minister of Justice and a major architect of the new legislation. "Had we insisted on it, the entire text would have been rejected by this one article," he added.

Critics also protest that the text of the new law fails to spell out the criminal nature of female genital mutilation (FGM) to which, it is estimated, at least 88,000 girls are subjected monthly.

The thousands of children who are denied Egyptian citizenship because they are born to an Egyptian mother and foreign father are not included in the text either: "We really wanted to include all of this, but you cannot shock society. You need to move slowly," El-Guindi said.

Though recent media reports have spotlighted accounts of parents who brutally beat, and sometimes even torture their children with electric shocks, heated iron bars and cigarette butts, the new code makes no mention of child abuse. "The law chooses to act as if it did not exist," said one children's rights activist.

The problem, according to sources at the Centre for Human Rights Legal Aid (CHRLA), is that the legislation does not consider the issues at hand within their larger context.

For example, in a bid to counter the growing trend of school drop-outs, the code stipulates that all children must attend school for 12 years. Non-governmental statistics suggest that among primary school students, at least 36 per cent — mostly girls living in rural areas — fail to finish their primary school education.

However, these same statistics show that 80 per cent of drop-outs come from very poor families who not only cannot afford to send their children to school, but who also are driven by dire economic circumstances to encourage or even force their offspring to work and bring in money for "more necessary things" than education.

Mohamed Mamdouh is a 12-year-old boy who dropped out from school at the age of nine to work at a car repair workshop in Al-Babaa. He enjoyed going to school even though his family could not afford to get him "nice clothes and new shoes at the beginning of every other academic year" like his school mates. Mohamed wanted to be an engineer, but because his father suddenly deserted the family and left them with no money to support themselves, he had to leave the classroom and work. "I am the man of this family. My mother works but we need more money," he said.

Doctors assert that children who have to work at bakeries, workshops and other dangerous small-scale industries that fail to meet the minimal environmental and health standards are subjected to serious health hazards. Sociologists add that these jobs often make children violent and prone to engage in criminal activity.

Last year, media reports described a horrific case involving the owner of a car repair workshop who pumped air into the bowels of a nine-year-old boy working for him. In another case, reported this year, a physician repeatedly beat an eight-year-old girl working for him as house help. When the girl complained to her family, the employer tied her to a bed in a dark room and left her with hardly any food or drink to stop her from making further complaints.

In both cases the employers were summoned to defend themselves in a court of law. But there is nothing to ensure that other children are not subject to the same mistreatment.

According to the government's own estimates, there are about 1.4 million children under the age of 14 in the labour market. Of these, 77 per cent work in agriculture, 9 per cent in workshops, 5 per cent in different services and 9 per cent in construction. Most of these children work up to 11 hours a day with no more than a 30-minute break.

At least half a million of these children had to work to support their families and the remainder went to work after their education became a big financial burden on their families.

Just like good education, a comprehensive healthcare system for children requires a massive budget which officials are still unprepared to allocate. But the health record card is another asset of the new code.

Sarah, Ibrahim and Shaima' are three school children, aged 4, 9

and 12 years. All three suffer from cancer. Their doctor, Mohamed Fawzi, says that early detection would have made their therapy easier and better. "So, from this point of view, the card system is going to be good if it incorporates proper full check-ups," Fawzi said.

On average each of these children need about LE60,000-LE100,000 for two years of treatment, according to Fawzi, who works at the National Centre for Tumours. Patients with more serious cases need much more money. If the child recovers successfully, additional money is needed for follow-up treatment for about five years. Sarah wants to be a painter, Ibrahim and Shaima' want to be doctors. For this to happen, enough money has to be provided.

The problem is that this legislation fails to mention funding," Fawzi said.

According to a study conducted by the Children Studies Centre at Ain Shams University, at least 40 per cent of Egyptian children suffer from some form of hepatitis. "Most of these cases are curable with the right treatment and nutrition, but who is going to provide for it?" asked one pediatrician who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Non-governmental organisations concerned with children's health care say that they can help the government if they are given a free hand.

The Human Relief Agency (HRA) of the Doctors Syndicate started a project, earlier this year, to annually provide 20 deaf and physically handicapped children with hearing and walking aids. "We do this in cooperation with the concerned governmental hospitals," said Mousa Abdel-Khalq of the HRA. The HRA collects donations, buys the equipment and gives it to the concerned hospitals and centres which then distribute them among children who cannot afford to buy medical aids. "But if the government issues a decree stopping us from collecting donations tomorrow, then we will stop," Abdel-Khalq said.

The status of abandoned and neglected children is another area which the legislation leaves obscure. Officials at the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) say they have no exact figures for the number of street kids in Egypt today.

But a recent UNICEF report suggests that there are around 60,000-90,000 street kids in Egypt, 40,000 of whom are illegitimate children or children who run away from family because of maltreatment or broken parental relations.

According to the UNICEF report, many of these children eventually become delinquents.

The MSA runs two types of shelters for abandoned and neglected children. It divides the girls and boys that it cares for, into two categories: the permanently and the temporarily neglected.

First, there are the abandoned, the illegitimate and those who have lost track of their families. This group, whose relatives are dead or cannot be traced, are taken to hundreds of foster families — a system applied in Egypt since the late 1950s — or one of three "children's villages". We figure that children in this category need long-term care and we believe that these are stable forms of care," said Effat El-Kateb, director of the MSA's childhood department.

The SOS village is one of the most prominent alternative children's villages. According to its director, Rashed Radi, SOS receives children from the age of two. "The Ministry of Health finds them abandoned when they are newborns or just a few weeks old. It refers them to wet nurses and then they come here," Radi explained.

Currently, there are 122 girls and boys at the SOS village in Nasr City. Two other SOS bases, located outside of Cairo, house some 200 children.

The children are divided into groups and each group is assigned to a "mother". They lead a perfectly normal life: go to school, and take pocket money," Radi said. According to him, the SOS has succeeded in establishing real family ties between the girls and boys of each "family".

If the child has a problem in "his or her family" they go to Radi who is the acting father of the entire village.

At the age of 16, boys leave the village and move to other shelters under the supervision of the MSA. "But they stay in touch with their sisters and younger brothers," noted Radi.

SOS provides for children until they receive enough education to get a job. "Also, if one of the girls or boys wanted to get married we act as the family and inquire about the prospective spouse and arrange for the wedding," Radi said.

"No, it is not like being with your own family. I see my girlfriends with their real parents and I can tell the difference," said one girl who asked for her name to be withheld. But, "it is better than being on the street".

El-Kateb admits that these children are not given 100 per cent real family-like treatment. "But it is second best".

The second category of neglected children, according to the guidelines of the MSA, comprises children who have families that cannot support them, either because of broken family ties or extreme poverty. "These are mostly kids who either have living relatives who cannot afford to support them or divorced or jailed parents," El-Kateb explained.

These children end up going to shelters where "they receive healthcare as well as education". Currently there are about 165 shelters that serve about 5,000 children a year. "As children come of age or get jobs, they become independent," El-Kateb said.

Children's rights activists argue that many of these shelters fail to provide for the basic emotional and material needs of the children and thus encourage them to run away and become independent.

In both cases the employers were summoned to defend themselves in a court of law. But there is nothing to ensure that other children are not subject to the same mistreatment.

According to the government's own estimates, there are about 1.4 million children under the age of 14 in the labour market. Of these, 77 per cent work in agriculture, 9 per cent in workshops, 5 per cent in different services and 9 per cent in construction. Most of these children work up to 11 hours a day with no more than a 30-minute break.

At least half a million of these children had to work to support their families and the remainder went to work after their education became a big financial burden on their families.

Just like good education, a comprehensive healthcare system for



photo: Khaled El-Fiqi

Girls' share

Reem Leita finds out that the smaller the family pie, the bigger the boys' share

Mohamed Osman, a carpenter, and Om Ali, his wife, do not believe in the rights of female children. "Males are the only creatures whose rights should be considered. My sons help me with my work, to read the newspapers, and whatever else I need. Girls are good for nothing but standing in front of the mirror," said Osman.

Om Ali echoes her husband's sentiments: "This is true. I give my husband and sons the better portion of food, while my daughters and I eat anything, it does not matter."

Attitudes such as those expressed by the Osman family are rather common. As a result, many young girls today are unable to enjoy the same rights as their male peers. This discrimination translates, in many cases, into a gender-segregated approach towards development programmes, education and healthcare.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) has defined human development as an individual's ability to choose among available alternatives. It appears that females have not achieved the desired human development because from birth and through different stages of their lives, they are unable to choose due to various social and cultural restrictions.

Though the Egyptian constitution provides both genders equal opportunity to obtain a free education, in practice the lower the social class of the family, the less a girl enjoys her rights as a child. Sociologist, Salwa El-Amry pointed out, "In 1994 illiteracy among males was estimated to be 35 per cent, while for females it was 60 per cent."

This phenomenon is especially true in poor families and those in rural areas. "Such families prefer to have the girls stay at home to be prepared for marriage. Boys are educated in order to work in suitable jobs, in the future, to earn a reasonable sum of money to cover their families' expenses," says El-Amry.

Inequality among male and female children is particularly obtrusive when it comes to healthcare. Though medical services are theoretically available to both males and females, male children enjoy more attention and care from their families, especially among the poorer classes. According to Dr Shafika Nasser, professor of public health at Cairo University, the mortality rate among girls between the ages of one and five is 58 per 1000, while for boys of the same age group it is 53 per 1000.

The greater attention given to boys' health is noticeable especially during the weaning period. Awatef El-Sayed, a housewife from a poor family, said, "I have to take care of my son more than the daughter because the boy has to work when he grows up, but the girl will get married."

The disparities in the treatment of genders are also evident in parents' attitudes towards children's vaccination and inoculation. A 1994 health poll showed that 70 per cent of male children have received all necessary vaccinations, while among the females the figure did not exceed 55 per cent.

Early marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM) are also common violations of young girls' rights. The official statistics in Egypt indicate that over 30 per cent of married women were first married at 16 years of age or under, while nearly 67 per cent of girls were subject to FGM.

"Early marriage and FGM are considered a crime against civil and Islamic laws," said Zeinab Radwan, member of the legislative committee of the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood.

Because of these social pressures, a girl's ambitions are curbed and her capabilities are often wasted. Boys sometimes find breathing space through involvement in social and other group activities like sports. These same choices and opportunities are not available to girls due to cultural and social restrictions.

According to psychologist Nahed Ramzy, studies analysing the content of children's books and magazines in Egypt reveal a clear gender-bias. Research also shows that historical and literary figures are generally male. All of the Egyptian children's magazines have male names.

"The proportion of female figures to the total personalities in a story is only 13 per cent," said Ramzy.

Street smarts

"MY PARENTS are dead. I have never known them. I have never had any uncles or aunts. I have never had a family," says a little boy who is about one metre tall, smiling broadly. He says his name is Sameh and that he is nine years old.

Sameh wears a green jumper on top of a grey turtle neck, both of which are riddled with holes, and a pair of ripped blue trousers that are too big for him to keep around his waist. One glance at his clothes is enough to see that they have not been washed for months — if ever. The same can be said of his hair and bare feet; both are almost hidden underneath thick layers of dirt and dust.

In his hands he holds a little

piece of dirty cloth. "With this I make everyday? At least LE5. Sometimes I make even LE7 or LE10," says Sameh.

This nine-year-old has never been to school. "Well, I live on the street in Tahrir [square] where all the buses park, and I sleep under a bridge nearby.

Sameh does not seem to be terribly bothered by living on the streets: "I do not live alone. I live with other kids. They are my friends. They also work in different things".

These other kids make their living by cleaning cars, selling bags of bread or packages of tissue paper, or working in workshops. "You know, I used to work at a bakery. It was very hard work. I would work all day and part of the night. But I

earned the money," he says emphatically.

One day the bakery owner asked Sameh to fetch him a package of cigarettes. "He gave me money to buy the expensive kind — not [the local] Cleopatra, but the red-labeled package for LE10. And that was it. I took the money and I took off. Well, of course I owed him much more but at least I got part of it," he says triumphantly.

That was a year ago.

And it was then that Sameh had his first encounter with Ahmed. "Ahmed is a big guy. He is not a kid like the rest of us. He is big." It was Ahmed who introduced Sameh to the cleaning business. "He let me sleep in a spot near his under the bridge." But like the bakery owner, Ahmed does not give Sameh enough money.

"If I make LE10 a day, he would only give me LE1. So if I wanted more money to, say, buy a nice dinner of Hawash (minced meat loafs) I have to make more than LE10," explains Sameh.

One particularly bad

day, Sameh earned LE2 and Ahmed failed to give him any of it. So Sameh decided to take revenge. "That night I waited till

he fell asleep and I took his blanket off him. Then, I went and slept far from that bridge. I was covered by the blanket all night through which is not bad because I do not have a blanket."

But in the morning Ahmed found him and beat him up.

While making do on the streets, Sameh is hoping for better. "I would like to get another job. I could work for a koshari restaurant," he says. It is the stability that makes a job with a koshari restaurant so attractive to Sameh. "I am very honest so I would never steal anything or any food. I would only eat what the owner offers me

Shoreline protection

Environmentalists are waving the stick most dear to entrepreneurs: clean up your act or don't even try to compete. Sherine Nasr reports from Hurghada

Hurghada's environment has been abused, investment has long been uncontrolled and tourism has suffered, say the environmentalists. Investors, on the other hand, complain about the bureaucracy of environmental regulations and worry about the costs of being too environmentally-friendly.

These foes (but sometimes also friends) met face-to-face in the first regional conference sponsored by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and the Environment Quality International (EQI) in Hurghada last month. There, environmentalists laid out the impact of poor tourism investments and proposed ways to make policy makers, investors and local residents aware of environmental regulations already in place, but not often abided by.

Between 40 and 60 per cent of the offshore coral reefs in Hurghada, for example, have been destroyed and developers have constructed tourist villages on top of them, said Salah Hafez, the EEAA executive director. The shoreline is now severely eroded and "we don't know when it will stop," he said. Though the reefs might in fact be dead, as investors claim, "they are vital for the propagation and growth of new reefs," he said.

Environment Law No. 4 of 1994 stipulates that new tourist projects not encroach on the natural shoreline. Marinas constructed on concrete, for example, are not allowed. And hotels may build their own marinas but only if they abide by EEAA criteria. Marinas are also required to have a valid operating licence and licenses are withdrawn when environmental regulations are violated.

Also part of the package are measures for bidding land filling (the EEAA decided to fill in lagoons that lie between land-filled "fingers" on the beach) and a requirement that investors submit an "environmental assessment impact" of a project for approval before construction begins.

The EEAA's Hafez believes such laws are the only way to ensure that violations don't occur.

The hospitality bit

EGYPT'S tourist trade is still being given a critical eye. Last month's World Tourism Organisation's (WTO) regional seminar on "Tourism Hospitality Education" was geared towards training and behaviour. Despite the increase in the number of tourists to the Middle East, and also to Egypt, Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagi doesn't believe that Egypt has yet obtained "its fair share of the international tourist movement." Hence the move to improve relevant curricula and teach hospitality.

Held at the International Conference Centre within the framework of the WTO "Educating the Educators" international training programme, the five-day seminar was attended by participants from the Middle East and North Africa, private and public sector companies and academic staff of related institutions and faculties.

Live from Korea

SOUTH Korea is fast becoming a promising tourist exporting country. In 1995, Egypt accommodated about 27,000 South Koreans, said Adel Abdel-Aziz, head of the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA) in an interview with the Korean TV programme *Travel and Transport News* (TTN). "With more effort, this number could multiply," he said. Korean TV will soon present 12 documentary travel films on Egypt called "Land of Eternal Journey" and covering Luxor, Sharm El-Sheikh, Aswan and Alexandria.

Egypt promotion also includes an advertising campaign in Korea, plans to open more Korean restaurants in Egypt and to train more Korean-speaking Egyptian tourist guides.

Spanish fever

THE SPANISH Travel Agencies Federation plans to hold its 1998 annual meeting in Cairo and more than 700 Spanish tour operators are expected to participate. In his recent visit to Egypt, the federation head, Jesus Millan, discussed with ETA head Adel Abdel-Aziz the importance of organising joint projects between the two countries. Other than an advertising campaign in Spain, they plan to sponsor trips to Egypt for Spanish journalists, tour operators and travel agency owners.

Compiled by Rehab Saad

EGYPT AIR	
Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:	
Abu Simbel Sales Office:	324836-324735
Alexandria Offices: Ramli:	483357-482878
Gleem:	585461-586434
Airport Office:	421846-4227888-428237-4281989
Aswan Office:	315000/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	483387-484568
Assuit Office:	323151-322711-324000-329407
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurghada Office:	44391/4
Airport Office:	44283-443597
Ismailia Office:	328937-221958-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	388580/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	3885678
Luxor Office Karnak:	382360
Marsa Matruh Office:	534398
Menoufia Office (Shebin El Kom):	23302-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	688701/695
Port Said Office:	224128-222878-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239978
Sharm El Sheikh Office:	606314-606409
Airport Office:	606408
Taba Office:	469/530010-530011
Direct:	5783620
Tanta Office:	311750/311760
Zakazik Office:	349829-349830/1

"Environmentally sound development is costly, but we have to make it clear to investors that it is the only possible means to achieve sustainable profits and long-term investment," he said, adding that environmentally protected areas like Sharm El-Sheikh "attract a calibre of tourist willing to considerably more for accommodation."

The regulations are, despite this reasoning, not without critics. Ali Khalil, a member of the Investors Society in Hurghada, claims, for example, that environmental assessments of the area as a whole is "normal," but to treat each project separately is "simply bureaucratic".

But fortunately, nature is patient. Time will enable the environment to readjust itself, perhaps in the course of twenty years or so. And de-

velopment has not been stemmed as much as subject to control. Other more informal environmental protection measures were also suggested at the conference.

"The local residents of Sharm El-Sheikh play an active part in preserving the environment, and this is what we are trying to establish in Hurghada," said Hafez. Though Captain Mustafa Taher, head of the Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA), similarly believes that "the support of the governorate" is necessary, he also thinks it is sufficient, and that there is no need for a special law. As rapid solutions need to be implemented to save underwater life in Hurghada, he would like diving centre operators, fishermen and boatmen to be immediately addressed. "These peo-

ple know exactly where to find coral reef formations and schools of fish," and thus can help safeguard these precious resources.

Most local sailors who work on fully-equipped hotel-owned boats, said Taher, do not know how to use the equipment and thereby pose a risk to the coral reefs. "They do not know how to read maps or operate radar or other safety devices." Though there is a monitoring system in place to watch out for anchors cast from boats or off-shore coral reefs, for example, Taher said that the measures are impractical: "It is not feasible for a naval unit to chase an amateur's motor boat over a great distance," he said, suggesting instead that a radar and wireless service be established along the shore to monitor and report violations.

Samih Sawiris, a businessman and owner of a number of tourist projects in the Red Sea area, wondered why the concern for a clean sea overrides concern for a clean city. "To ensure a clean city is an easier task, but the governorate seems to ignore this fact," he said. "The sight of garbage plastic bags and debris near Hurghada port and in the streets is appalling to foreigners." He suggested that trucks unloading debris have their licences withdrawn for at least a month. The confiscated vehicle could then be used to clean the city streets. "This is what happened to one of my company's trucks. The violation, I might add, was the last committed by the company drivers."

The conference was part of an awareness campaign launched by the EEAA and conducted by the EQI to consolidate a front supportive of environmentally sound practices in Egypt. A series of other conferences will soon take place in Luxor, Aswan, Alexandria and Ismailia to discuss means of conserving the cultural heritage of Egypt and curb sea erosion in coastal cities. Until such practices become the norm rather than the exception, Hurghada must be dealt with strictly "or it will soon become a third-rate resort," said Hafez.

Spotlight on Hurghada

INSPECTORS have been scouting through Hurghada's shops to uncover illegal sales of corals and shells. Last month, a number of violations were referred to courts for appropriate punishment. Shops can be permanently shut down after the second violation.

NATURAL preserves are on the increase in the Red Sea area, thanks to efforts made by the EEAA. Soon to be so dubbed is Wadi El-Gemal, a valley 55km south of Marsa Alam, famous for its abundant palms and papyrus, and further south at Elba, an archipelago of 24 islands famous for its mangroves.

RED SEA Governor Abdelf-Moneim Said and major investors have formed a Higher Council for Tourism. Among items on the agenda of their monthly meetings are fund-raising, road paving and area greening.

GARBAGE is a problem in Hurghada and major investors are working collectively to solve it. Funds have already been collected, a project to recycle garbage into fertilisers is underway, and a study is being conducted by the Faculty of Engineering at Alexandria University to select an appropriate location for a permanent garbage dump.

CONSTRUCTION regulations are now neatly packaged into a guide and provided to investors by the Hurghada Governorate. Among the banned and stipulated are the following: buildings that overlook the sea cannot exceed one storey; higher buildings are only permitted inside the city; no building may occupy more than 20 per cent of a project's total land area; local materials are preferably used in construction; white must be the colour of newly constructed building facades; and bright lights are banned on the beach so as not to disturb the coral reefs and marine life.

The conference was part of an awareness campaign launched by the EEAA and conducted by the EQI to consolidate a front supportive of environmentally sound practices in Egypt. A series of other conferences will soon take place in Luxor, Aswan, Alexandria and Ismailia to discuss means of conserving the cultural heritage of Egypt and curb sea erosion in coastal cities. Until such practices become the norm rather than the exception, Hurghada must be dealt with strictly "or it will soon become a third-rate resort," said Hafez.

Mameluke masterpiece on display

After four years of restoration work, Beit Zeinab Khatoun has been opened to the public. Nevine El-Aref describes its charms

Beit Zeinab Khatoun is one of the most charming Mameluke houses to be found in the Al-Azhar area of Cairo. It was built in 1468, when the architectural style was in an early stage of development. The house is located in El-Tahbia Street where it is surrounded by other medieval houses — including Beit El-Harawi, which is in the Turkish style, and Beit Sitt Wasila, another house in the Mameluke architectural style — and the great mosque of Al-Azhar.

In typical Mameluke style, the house comprises a main entrance which leads to an open courtyard surrounded by many rooms. The rooms include a *salameli* (men's wing), a *haremlik* (women's wing) and a *mig'ad seif* (summer sitting room).

Beit Zeinab Khatoun was named after its last owner, Zeinab Khatoun, the wife of El-Sherif Hamza El-Kharbotly, a high-ranking government official in the first half of the last century. Documents reveal that the first owner of the house was the great-granddaughter of Sultan Qalawun, who lived in the 13th century.

The elegance of the house was such that the building was officially registered as a historical site in 1882 and partially restored many times by the Arab Archaeological Committee from 1883 until 1953. Mohamed El-Soghayer, general director of antiquities for northern Cairo, explained that major restoration was carried out in 1905 when the walls were strengthened and an inner wooden staircase linking the two upper levels of the house was constructed. All wooden elements, including ceilings and closets, were cleaned and restored at that time. In 1932 a new entrance was made giving direct access to the second floor. In 1942 the house was rented to a British general who built a fountain in the middle of the open courtyard on the first floor.

After the revolution of 1952, El-Soghayer continued, the house was given to the Ministry of Social Insurance which turned it into a weaving school for girls, and the house deteriorated alarmingly. In 1981 the school was relocated and the house was closed for restoration.

At the opening ceremony last week Abdelf-Halim Nouredini, secretary-general of the Supreme Council Of Antiquities (SCA), said that the restoration was carried out by Egyptians and financed by the SCA. El-Soghayer said that the aim of the recent restoration project was to strengthen the house structurally, to replace damaged stones by others of the same size, shape and quality as the original and to treat woodwork for the effects of the environment and insects.

In an effort to develop the area around Beit Zeinab Khatoun, the SCA has cultivated a small garden between it and Beit El-Harawi. The house is open to the public between 8 am and 2 pm and may later open for a period in the afternoon as well. The price of admission is LE5 for foreigners, LE2.50 for foreign students and PT50 for Egyptians.



photo: Sherif Sonbol

Aswan's healing sands

Like Safaga, Aswan is emerging as a curative destination for sufferers of rheumatic illnesses. Rehab Saad explored the Isis Island spa's potential

If a place is endowed, as is Aswan, with dry weather, unpolluted air, sweet water, a landscape of the Nile, mountains, the ochre shaded desert and palm trees, it could just be a pictureque site. But graced as it is with "black sand" that helps treat rheumatism, this Upper Egyptian city has all the ingredients necessary for health tourism.

Aswan has long proven itself a destination famous for tombs, temples and *felucca* rides and is now striving to promote its repute as a health spa locale. It's not a new reputation; from the time of the pharaohs through to the Graeco-Roman and medieval periods until the present time, Aswan's curative powers have been well-known. The reputation has simply been reinvented at the Isis Hotel.

"Before we built the hotel, the people of Aswan who suffered from rheumatism used to come to this very spot and bury themselves in the sand," said Magdi Michael, general manager of the new health resort on Isis Island.

The late Aga Khan, who suffered from rheumatism, took his doctors' advice and also tried the sand cure in Aswan. The treatment was so successful that he returned annually to Aswan. Before he died, he asked to be buried in the only place he found relief, overlooking his favourite section of the Nile.

The first attempt to promote Aswan as a place of healing was when previous Minister of Tourism Adel Taher invited 15 foreign

patients who were so crippled by rheumatic pains that they were confined to wheelchairs. Accompanied by their doctors, they stayed in Aswan for 15 days and were buried in the healing sands on a daily basis. They left Egypt on their own two feet. An Egyptian Tourist Authority film shows the patients dancing with Nubians on the eve of their departure.

Aswan's Governor Salaf Moustafa is optimistic about the new kind of health tourism being promoted there and wants to reach out to Scandinavian countries "where the weather is extremely cold and rheumatoid ailments are widespread," he said.

The launching of the Isis Hotel as a health spa came after the Red Sea resort of Safaga made a name for itself as the "black sand" pioneer. There, scientists gained experience in natural curing methods after studies showed that people living in Safaga and Aswan hardly ever suffered from rheumatoid ailments. "At the outset, we had no idea how the sand should be exploited or even how long a patient should be buried in it," said Maher Yousef Isufian, head of the research group of the National Research Centre.

Every patient now undergoes a medical examination before treatment; doctors check on the efficiency of the patient's immunity system and muscle infections are cured. The sand treatment lasts between 21 to 28 days and the patient is coated in a 3 to 5cm layer of sand for two to three hours daily, at sunset or sunrise. The treat-

How to get there

Standard trains: Services 9am, 1pm, noon, 5pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22, second class LE17.

"French" trains: Services hourly from 6am to 10pm. Tickets first class LE20, second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said: Services 6.20am and 8.45am. Tickets first class LE45, second class LE26.

Cairo-Alexandria: Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19, 2pm, 5pm, LE22 thereafter. From the airport: 7.30am, 1pm, 5pm, LE20 thereafter.

Cairo-Cairo: Services every half hour from 6am to 9pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Almaza 6.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Pto Said: Services every half hour from 6am to 9pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3.30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Luxor: Services every half hour from 6am to 9pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Luxor 2.30pm. Tickets LE60 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada: Services every half hour from 6am to 9pm, from Ramleh Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurghada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh: Services 11pm from Tahrir, then Almaza, Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

Cairo-Sinai Bus Company: Services to north Sinai, south Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez departs from Qantara Station. Buses to north Sinai and Port Said. Tickets LE20 per person for a double room including service and taxes. Valid until 30 September.

Hurghada: Hurghada Intercontinental, LE200 per person for a single room including service and taxes. Valid until 15 July.

Hurghada Marriott: LE200 per person for a double room including service and taxes. Valid until 15 July.

Hurghada Regency: LE190 per person for a double room including service and taxes. Valid until 15 July.

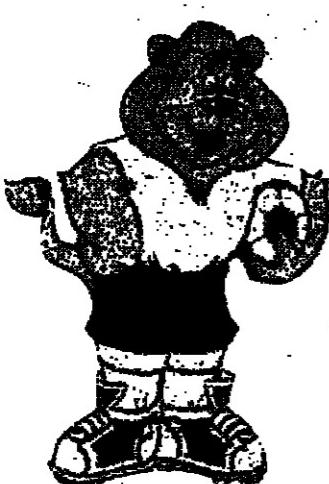
Cairo-Sinai: Services every 45 minutes from 6.30am to 6pm, from Qalubi, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE5.75; air-conditioned bus LE5.25, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish: Services every hour from 7.30am to 4pm, from Qalubi, then Almaza and Tagnid Square. Tickets LE27; air-conditioned bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE13, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh: Services every 45 min from 7am to 6.30pm from Abbasiya, then Almaza, Tagnid Square. Tickets



Germany's Stephan Reuter (R) and Russia's Igor Kolyvanov (L) fight for the ball during a group C match (photo: Reuters)



EURO 96

It's a knockout

By the time *Al-Ahram Weekly* hits the newsstands, the top two teams from each group in the Euro 96 soccer championship, which will go through to the quarterfinals, should be known. Whatever the outcome, observers agree that the early stages of the championship have produced some memorable football.

Two teams have already qualified — Germany and Croatia. Russia, Turkey and Romania are out. The rest of the teams are counting on luck — and skill.

Germany, twice winners — in 1972 and 1980 — were the first

to qualify, defeating the Czech Republic 2-0 and Russia 3-0. The Germans, known for their agility and toughness on the pitch, kept their cool in the match against Russia. They allowed the Russians, who lack good finishers, pretty free access to the penalty area, especially during the first half. The Germans also seemed to be taking care with their tactics, perhaps wary of the strictness of the referees. Germany lost a key defender to injury during their match with the Czechs; it seems they were unwilling to risk any red cards in this match.

Defender Matthias Sammer put the Germans in the lead in the 56th minute, before Jurgen Klinsmann, just back from suspension, scored two more goals in the 77th and 92nd minutes. Meanwhile, Croatia, whose 1-0 win performance over Turkey was below expectations, woke from slumber to thrash defending champions Denmark 3-0. The new nation of Croatia took their opponents by storm and shredded their defence, which resulted in the collapse of the Danish game pattern. Davor Suker, who scored two of the match's three goals, proved to be

a real danger.

Bulgaria, parading a similar squad to their 1994 World Cup team, including hitman Hristo Stoichkov, are fighting to improve on their 1968 performance, the only time they have reached the quarterfinals. The Bulgarians drew 1-1 with Spain and defeated Romania 1-0. Should Bulgaria overcome France, they will have proved themselves as a side to be taken seriously in the future. Coach Aime Jacquet of France, who dropped Eric Cantona, is relying on new talents, led by Youri Djorkaeff, to produce the much-needed magic.

Italy's 2-1 loss to the Czech Republic was a big upset for the Italians, putting coach Arrigo Sacchi under attack at home. Mafia Godfather Toto Rini was reported as saying, "Sacchi committed tactical suicide. His selections were

whether or not Italy manage to regain their form and record a win over Germany, their defeat at the hands of the new Czech Republic team will live forever.

On the sidelines

ITALY coach, Arrigo Sacchi, had no regrets about the controversial changes to his team despite Friday's 2-1 Euro 96 loss to the Czech Republic.

"I would do the same again, whether we had won or lost," he said. Sacchi made five changes in the starting line-up of the team which defeated Russia 2-1 on Tuesday.

ITALIAN team captain Paolo Maldini is to return home for 24 hours after his wife gave birth to a son, Kristian, on Friday.

"I am very happy, but let's not mix this up with today's defeat," Maldini said following Italy's loss to the Czech team.

DUTCH mid-fielder Edgar Davids has been thrown out of the Dutch Euro 96 squad, coach Guus Hiddink confirmed on Friday.

Davids was sent home after criticising Hiddink for dropping him from the starting line-up of a match against Switzerland at Villa Park, Birmingham, on last Thursday.

RUSSIA has lodged protests with UEFA about the quality of refereeing at Euro 96.

Coach Oleg Romanov said on Friday that if referees were not up to scratch they should be "suspended or replaced".

KILTS and Sporrans returned to Wembley for the first time in eight years last Saturday, but the invasion by Scottish soccer fans turned out to be peaceful even though they saw England trounce their team 2-0.

Police made 64 arrests during the day, and reported only sporadic clashes on Saturday night after the European championship match at the British capital's main stadium. Major battles between the ancient rivals appeared to have been averted, partly because large numbers of police had been deployed in Central London. The arrests were fewer than expected and police said they were very pleased by the behavior of the 76,000 fans at the ground.

SPAIN'S Luis Enrique has another chance to leave his mark on Euro 96 and win his second major tournament following his Olympic gold medal in Barcelona in 1992.

The 26-year-old Real Madrid mid-fielder, who has not yet reached his full potential, is sure to remain one Spain's leading players for the next five years.

WHEN Jordi Cruyff scored against Switzerland, it was not only important for the Dutch team, but vital for him.

"My goal was liberating," said the player who is always compared with his famous father. "I needed it for my future, for myself and for the whole situation."

The 22 year-old Dutchman must fancy his chances on Tuesday against England at Wembley. Playing at outside-right, he has the place to discomfort the aging Stuart Pearce.

ARCE EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES PROJECT REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR THE MASTER PLAN PRESERVATION & PRESENTATION OF THE DISTRICT OF OLD CAIRO

The Egyptian Antiquities Project (EAP) of the American Research Center in Egypt, Inc (ARCE) under its USAID Grant No. 263-0000-G-00-3089-00 is soliciting priced proposals from qualified, experienced professional organizations & individuals to prepare the Master Plan: Preservation & Presentation of the District of Old Cairo. Proposals will be competitively evaluated.

Proposals are due in Cairo at the ARCE Egyptian Antiquities Project Offices on or before 1 PM Cairo time on Sept 19, 1996.

Review and selection may take up to two (2) months. Approx four (4) additional months are estimated for approval by government authorities before the work can commence. Interested parties may obtain a RFP package from ARCE/EAP from June 15. Send request by mail or fax:

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Squash out of the cold

Civilizations rise and fall, the tide ebbs and wanes, and the performance of Egypt's national squash teams has been erratic — but for how long asks Eman Abdel-Moezi



Salma Shabana and Maha Zeis potential world stars

Sometimes, all it takes is one win to put some perspective back into a sport on the national level. Such was the case for squash in Egypt. The country's squash players have never really been absent from the international arena, but as individuals they have distinguished themselves only occasionally. As a team, however, it's a different story. At various competitions over the past few years, they have managed to secure a place as one of the world's top four teams along with Pakistan, Great Britain and Australia. Nonetheless, while victory may not have eluded them, recognition on the national level certainly did.

That is, at least until Ahmed Barada led the Egyptian junior team to victory in the 1993 World Championship. Amid tremendous hoopla and fanfare, the national squash team found itself celebrated as an example of renaissance — the re-emergence of a power that faded away from the limelight as quickly as it walked into it.

No one really denies that Egypt has traditionally been a strong contender on the international squash arena. However, the formula for success is not comprised solely of talent. This is merely a catalyst for victory. Without money and support, this skill cannot be developed, and the end result is that adept players may simply lose interest and move on. Ahmed Safwat and Abbas Kaoud, the national team's coaches, are cases in point. Before assuming their coaching responsibilities, they were players in their own right. Now residing in England, roughly 20 years ago they were members of the Egyptian national team that took fourth in the 1976 World Championship. In 1977, the team took third in the same

competition and fourth in 1979. But unable to find the funding and support they needed to continue playing for Egypt, they left for England, relying on coaching jobs to earn money in order to remain on the professional circuit.

The problem that plagued the national squash team during these years was the same one that other national teams in Egypt encountered — federations operating with a low budget but who were more concerned with team results than individual performances. The flaw in this kind of logic is that it ignores a fundamental fact of team sport life: how individual performance and that of the team also increases.

Barada, Ahmed Faizy and Karim El-Mistikawi's victory in 1993 helped push this realization forward in the minds of officials in the Egyptian Squash Federation (ESF).

"Barada opened the door for talented, aspiring squash players," said Kaoud, Barada's coach.

couraging sports clubs like the Heliopolis Club to organise international competitions, thereby hopefully attracting the world's best squash pros.

For the women's national team in particular, this was a giant step in the right direction, giving them much-needed international exposure and experience.

"Overseas, I've played with squash stars like Sue Rite and Suzanne Horner, but championships like the Heliopolis International Squash Championships afford me the same chances without incurring the travel expenses," commented Salma Shabana, world-ranked number 33.

Shabana is one of the few women on the team that has had a good deal of international experience. Her knock on the door of opportunity came when she won third place in the Junior World Championship in Sydney in 1995. She then went on to participate in the British Open, emerging as number 28 in the world. A brief hiatus, from September 1995 to June 1996, set her back in the ranks to number 33.

Despite her success, no other member of the women's national team has made it past the second round of the main draw of any international competition. International tournaments in Egypt may give these players the chance they need.

To this end, on the very near horizon is the Junior World Championship which will be held in Egypt from 13-19 July. Out of this competition, that brings together 137 players from 29 countries, Egypt hopes to clinch the Junior's World title for the second time. "With Ahmed Faizy, Karim El-Mistikawi and Amr Shabana competing, we should be able to win the competition," said Ibrahim Amin, president of the ESF.

Games countdown

WITH ONLY 29 days to go for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, *Al-Ahram Weekly* kicks off its own series on the Games' final preparations

The Games at a Glance

What

Games of the XXVII Olympiad, marking 100 years of Olympic competition.

When

17 days, 19 July to 4 August 1996.

Where

The main events will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, but five other communities in Georgia and another five outside the state will host some of the events.

Who

The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) is responsible for staging the games. The ACOG is a private, non-profit organization.

Delegations

For the first time in Olympic history, every delegation invited by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has accepted, bringing the total number of countries competing to 197.

Athletes

More than 10,000 athletes will compete for the gold, including nearly 40 per cent more women than in the 1992 Olympics Games — 3,779 women are expected to compete in the 1996 Games compared to 2,708 in 1992.

Sports

The competition will encompass 26 sports, 31 disciplines, 271 events.

Medals

1,838 total — 604 gold — will be awarded, excluding additional ones for competition ties.

Venues

29 competition venues; 29 Olympic arts festival venues; total 181 venues, including all non-competition venues; command centers, medical facilities, training and warm-up sites, warehouses and hospitality centres.

Edited by Inas Mazhar

Lisez

En vente tous les mercredis

Dossier sur le Sommet du Caire
Les Arabes face à Israël et face à eux-mêmes

Annulation de la loi sur la presse
Les journalistes retrouvent leurs droits

Accord économique
La Tunisie s'ouvre à l'Europe

Anas Al-Wogoud
La première d'un opéra très égyptien

Site
Abou-Mina, patrimoine mondial

Rédacteur en Chef Exécutif Mohamed Salmawy

Président et Rédacteur en Chef Ibrahim Nafie

Special supplement on Denmark to celebrate its National Day



Her Majesty Queen Margaret II of Denmark

The queen of Denmark celebrates her country's National Day every year in June. Denmark — one of the Northern European countries and one of the Scandinavian countries — has strong political and economical relations with the Arab world and Egypt in particular. For that reason Al-Ahram thought of issuing this supplement which demonstrates the good relations between both countries. On this occasion it is our pleasure to thank the Egyptian ambassador in Copenhagen, Taher Khalifa, and the head of the Egyptian Commercial Relations Office in Copenhagen, 'Aia Qanawi, the staff of the Egyptian Embassy and the chamber of commerce and the Egyptian community in Denmark for their cooperation with Al-Ahram in issuing this supplement. We wish them best of luck in the service of our beloved country, Egypt.

Statement by H.E. Mr Poul Nielson, minister for development cooperation of the government of Denmark:

Denmark strongly supports Egypt's efforts for peace in the Middle East



Poul Nielson

I first express my appreciation to the editors of Al-Ahram for taking this initiative to promote the relations between Denmark and Egypt. In January this year I had the pleasure of visiting Egypt in my present capacity. I had fruitful and productive discussions with the ministers of electricity and power, environment, finance, and international development cooperation. I also had the opportunity of visiting several development projects which Denmark supports. Among these was the water supply and sanitary drainage project in Edfu which reached the operational stage in November last year. This is the biggest single project undertaken so far by Denmark and Egypt and will benefit approx. 100,000 people in the city of Edfu and a number of surrounding villages by providing

them with safe drinking water and sanitation. Danish-Egyptian development cooperation began more than 30 years ago in 1965 with a small project to treat children and young people with hearing and speech problems from all over Egypt. Since 1989 Egypt has been one of the 20 priority countries for Danish development assistance. For the period from 1996 to 2000 Denmark expects to make available a total of LE700mn, all in grants.

In 1996 there will be important new developments in the cooperation between Egypt and Denmark.

The new country strategy for Egypt will come into force. This aims at concentrating our assistance to Egypt within the sectors of environmental pro-

tection, new and renewable energy and energy conservation, and water and sanitation in Upper Egypt.

Egypt will be included in the Danish Private Sector Programme which aims at establishing long-term collabora-

tion between Danish and Egyptian companies. The programme supports start-up activities, studies, training programmes, technical assistance and improvement of occupational safety and health as well as the external environment.

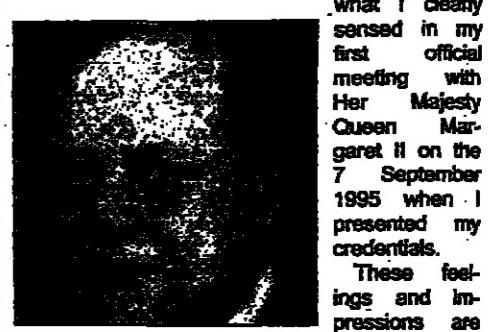
The objectives of our development policy — as an integral part of Danish foreign policy — is the promotion of common security, promotion of democratic

and Egypt should evolve into sector programme assistance which entails support to a range of broadly based activities in the sectors which I have mentioned above. We look forward to working even closer together in planning and implementing the new sector programmes.

Let me end by expressing my appreciation for the role of Egypt in the peace process in the Middle East. Egypt has played an important role in trying to solve conflicts in the region and is now an active facilitator in the negotiations between Israel and the PLO concerning the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the interim agreement which was concluded in Taba in September last year. Denmark fully supports these efforts in the hope that the result will lead to peace in the area.

Copenhagen: Mohamed Self El-Yazal

Egyptian-Danish relations: continuous interaction and unlimited cooperation



Taher Khalifa

It has been both my pleasure and surprise to know that the solid base of strong and deep-rooted relations. This is what I clearly sensed in my first official meeting with Her Majesty Queen Margaret II on the 7 September 1995 when I presented my credentials.

These feelings and impressions are the same which pave the path for unlimited cooperation and development prospects between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Denmark.

A marked increase in commercial relations between the two countries

Statement by H.E. Mr Sten Lilholt, ambassador of Denmark to Egypt:

I should like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Al-Ahram for once again publishing a special supplement on Denmark on the occasion of its Constitution Day, and I am honoured to make a contribution.

Over the years Egyptian-Danish relations have grown in many fields. 1995 saw an increase in our trade relations, which reached a total of LE575mn. At present Denmark enjoys a substantial trade surplus, but it is my hope that Egypt's ongoing economic reform process will lead to higher exports, including to Denmark.

Egypt's exports to Denmark consist mainly of fruits and vegetables and of textiles and garments. On the other hand, Danish exports to Egypt is concentrated on 3 product groups. They are foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals and chemicals, as well as machinery. These account for approximately 90 per cent of our exports.

Development cooperation has been a prominent feature in Egyptian-Danish relations for well over a quarter of a century. Originally Denmark provided assistance in the form of soft loans. However, since 1989 all development cooperation between our countries has been on a grant basis. To alleviate Egypt's debt burden Denmark participated in the Paris Club's debt relief arrangement for Egypt in 1991 leading to a 50 per cent debt reduction. And last year in connection with the United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen, Denmark unilaterally canceled LE225mn. of Egypt's outstanding debt to Denmark.

During my stay in Egypt it has been a pleasure for me to see an increasing number of development cooperation projects being launched and completed. I should like to extend my warm thanks and appreciation to the many Egyptians who are involved in these projects and whose commitment and dedication is a major factor in ensuring their success.

Diplomats in Copenhagen

Magda Nasr, minister assigned to the Egyptian Embassy in Copenhagen, graduated from the faculty of economics and political science in 1973. She is married to Egyptian Ambassador Nasr Mahdi. She worked in the department of international economical cooperation in Sudan and North America.



Magda Nasr

Khaled Hisham Dakru is an under-secretary at the Egyptian Consulate. He graduated from Ain Shams University in 1984. He was an under-secretary in the embassy in Copenhagen in 1985.



Khaled Hisham Dakru

Nafie Osman graduated from the Faculty of Commerce, Cairo University in 1975, before joining the Foreign Ministry in 1976, working in the general finance administration and in the Latin American foreign minister's office. He worked in the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad from 1985-88. He is currently posted at the Egyptian Embassy in Copenhagen.



Nafie Osman

Mustafa Abdel-Azim El-Gindi graduated from the faculty of commerce, and worked for a while in the Egyptian Embassy in Tel Aviv, before taking an embassy post in Copenhagen.



Mustafa Abdel-Azim El-Gindi

Engineering af better environment

منحة تحسين البيئة



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كروجر هي الشركة الدنماركية الرائدة في منحة البيئة التي تتمتع بخبرة عالمية واسعة في مجالات تنقية وادارة مياه الشرب، والصرف الصحي، معايير المياه، المصرف الصحي والمائي، معايير الامانة والنفايات الصلبة وكذلك استخدامات الغازات البيولوجية.

تقوم مجموعة كروجر من خلال شركاتها المختلفة بخدمات استشارية أو تنفيذية للمشروعات كمقاولين. وكذلك تقديم كروجر خدماتها في مجالات التسخين والسيارات بالإضافة إلى برنامج لتدريب التقنيين

والمهندسين. وتحافظ كروجر على مستوى اهتمامها الفنى المرتفع عن طريق التطوير المستمر لاساليبها التكنولوجية وانظمتها وعملياتها. وتوظيف كروجر في تصميم معداتها ان توفر امكانية تسييسها محلياً، مما يساعد على نقل التكنولوجيا و كذلك خفض المكالفة.

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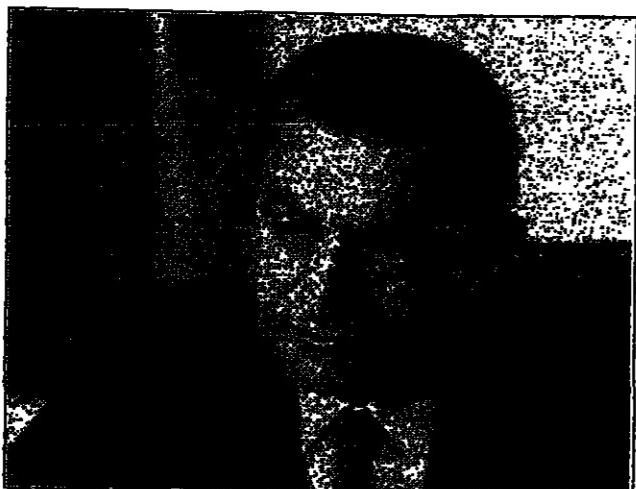
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SLIP AW

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Special supplement on Denmark to celebrate its National Day

Novo Nordisk: The world leader in diabetes care



President Hosni Mubarak

In an interview with Dr Mahmoud Nabil Abdel-Rehim, country manager of Novo Nordisk in Egypt on the occasion of Denmark National Day, he said: "We've been serving Egyptian diabetics for more than 40 years. Novo Nordisk Egypt always introduces the most recent innovations in the field of diabetes. Some years ago, Novo Nordisk introduced the NovoPen 3, the 'insulin pen', which is highly recommended by diabetologists and physicians. Thousands of Egyptian diabetics showed great satisfaction after using NovoPen

3. Our prime objective is to upgrade the awareness and knowledge about diabetes among Egyptian diabetics.

Novo Nordisk has established a training and education centre in our office to guide patients on how to use the NovoPen 3 according to physician's instructions.

Novo Nordisk participates in symposia, conferences and arranges seminars and teaching courses for the medical community dealing with diabetes in Egypt.

Novo Nordisk is determined to keep on being



Ismail Sallam
the best in diabetes care in Egypt under the guidance of Dr Ismail Sallam, the minister of health and population, and the wise leadership of President Hosni Mubarak.

Environmental protection, a necessity for the survival of mankind

There is no doubt that a direct link exists between environmental pollution and the spreading of numerous diseases, the likes of which were not known until recently.

The provision of pure potable water is an essential criterion for the survival of mankind and its protection from such diseases.

In Egypt, this concern is now reflected in the policies and plans of the authorities concerned, which include the ministries of housing, utilities, new communities, water resources, the Environmental Affairs Agency, as well as the governments.

Top priority has been given to water purification, projects protection of water resources, receiving and treating industrial wastewater to be reused in irrigation, along with allocating the funds necessary for implementing these projects.

These efforts conform perfectly with the state's obligations with regard to public health and protection of water resources.

Eng. Hassan Noureddine, responsible for the Middle East for the Krüger company adds: "Denmark has been — and still is — a pioneer country with regard to environmental protection and fighting all kinds of pollution, whether on the European or international levels.

Krüger is the largest Danish company specialising in the field of potable water treatment and supply, treatment of domestic and industrial wastewater as well as solid waste treatment and biogas plants. Established in 1903, Krüger is also a pioneer within these fields.

Eng. Hassan Noureddine joined the company 26 years ago, and is now the area manager for the Middle East. He

adds: Krüger's activities in Egypt started in 1982, and comprise the design, construction and equipment supply for many projects. These designs are either locally financed such as the project for 55 sewage treatment plants for NOPWASD through the aircraft factory or financed by a Danish grant such as the Edfu water supply and sanitary drainage project.



Hassan Noureddine

Special supplement on Denmark to celebrate its National Day

B-Light Diet: The delicious and healthy way to lose weight

According to recent studies, scientists have realised that losing weight protects from cardiac diseases and arteriosclerosis as it reduces cholesterol and high blood pressure. B-Light is the ideal meal replacement as it is a complete nutritional programme that makes you get rid of the excess weight thus keeping slim, beautiful and elegant, especially that it contains unsaturated fatty acids, found in vegetable oils, and helps reduce cholesterol levels.

It is known that during regular diets, the problem of vitamin deficiency arises from the reduction of meals. A common misconception is that vitamins increase the body's weight. The only role vitamins play is sustaining the healthy balance of a good metabolism. Since the human body cannot produce vitamins on its own during its physiological organic process, it must have sufficient external sources of vitamins, during diets. B-Light contains 13 kinds of vitamins in addition to 14 different kinds of minerals such as calcium, phosphorous and iodine, which is not found in most of our meals, and plays an important role in gout prevention.

Making B-Light the ideal meal replacement without any complications or side effects, carbohydrates, proteins and little fat have been added. The existence of vegetable fibres gives a genuine feeling of satisfaction thus preventing depression and weakness occurring from hunger and securing the normal function of the digestive system, thus ensuring the body's acceptance of normal meals when the diet is over.

B-Light is the only diet product that is added only to water in addition to each serving available in easy to carry packets, making it easy to use during work or travel.



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Abou Bakr Eid

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Economic and commercial relations between Egypt and Denmark

Denmark is considered one of the strongest European economies and is likewise considered to be at the forefront of the Scandinavian, Baltic Sea, and Polish markets.

Denmark witnessed an economic boom in the middle of 1992 and 1994. Denmark realised an increase in its economic growth in total local production reaching 2.6 per cent and continued to increase throughout 1996.

Egypt and Denmark have signed a number of economic and commercial agreements and have organised commercial exchange on the basis of a cooperative agreement between Egypt and the European Economic Union, signed on 9 February 1988. Following this were a number of other protocols involving coal, textiles and cotton, in addition to a special protocol giving exclusive advantages to Egyptian exports.

In the area of economic and technological cooperation which helps bind relations between the two countries, the formation of a cooperative council took place, meeting annually to oversee projects and issue directives for them. The two countries also signed an agreement which prohibits tax increases on capital funds for projects involving cooperation between the two countries.

At the same time, another agreement was signed between the Egyptian Industries Federation and the Danish Industries Federation, calling for the establishment of industrial and technical cooperation. A further agreement resulted in the establishment of the Egyptian-Danish Businessmen Association, with the goal of boosting com-

mercial and investment ties between the two countries.

In the area of commercial exchange, Egyptian exports to Denmark in 1995 reached 77mn krona, mostly in textiles and ready-made clothing (especially T-shirts), produce, leather products and furniture. Egyptian imports from Denmark in the same year reached a value of 900mn krona.

Preparations are currently underway for Egypt to participate in the African Commerce Week Fair, organised by the Danish Chamber of Commerce in Copenhagen. The Danish side is giving reduced rates and discounts to countries involved in the fair to encourage participation.

In the area of economic cooperation, Denmark provided Egypt with loans between 1969 to 1988 at a value of 8.5mn krona, with a 25-year limit.

In 1989, an agreement was signed which provided grants for various projects, including electrical power, environmental protection, and water treatment, to be implemented in Upper Egypt. Likewise, the grant is to go towards agricultural projects.

In 1994, Denmark gave grants valued at 100mn krona to Egypt. As for 1995, it was decided to increase that amount of aid to 190mn krona, following the 5-year plan between the two countries. Furthermore, the Danish government provided a grant to Egypt valued at 200mn krona in 1996,

which will increase to 225mn krona annually from 1997 to 1999.

Paul Nelson, the Danish minister of cooperation and development recently inaugurated a water treatment project in the city of Edfu, funded by the Danish government. The inauguration took place during the minister's visit to Egypt last January. On the other hand, the Danish government absolved Egypt of 370mn krona in loans accrued by Egypt from 1969 to 1986.

In the area of direct investment, the number of cooperative projects between the two countries until 30 June 1995 has reached 13, among

these, one in a free zone with a capital of LE130mn. Investment costs have reached LE304mn. Denmark's share in the capital of the projects is LE81mn, which is 62 per cent. The projects are distributed in the field of industry, service, financing and agriculture.

Within the framework of efforts exerted to encourage Danish investment in Egypt, research is currently underway studying the possibilities of an agreement to protect investment exchange between the two countries.

It is expected that such an agreement will be signed in the near future. It is hoped that the agreement will strengthen the bridge of cooperation between the two countries and encourage an increase of Danish capital to be invested in Egyptian projects, thus doubling economic and social growth.

A profile of success



Yasser Rifaat

Yasser Rifaat Hassan is an Egyptian who found success in Denmark. He emigrated in 1992, working in his uncle's restaurant in Copenhagen. He learned Danish in record time, which helped him secure a job at the commercial office of the Egyptian Embassy where he presently works as a secretary. He also provides valuable assistance to a number of Egyptian delegations visiting Denmark.

A man of the world



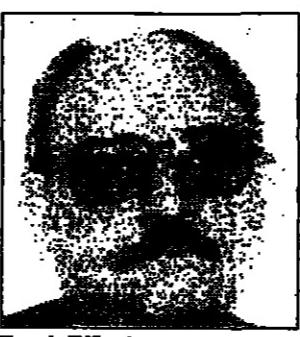
Mohamed Kamal

Mohamed Mustafa Kamal has been attached to the Diplomatic Corps since 1979. Kamal ended a 4-year term at the Egyptian Embassy in Copenhagen, which he had been at since 1992, heading the consulate affairs office and witnessing a number of important events in the capital, including: Denmark's heading of the European Union (1993); the International Parliamentary Conference (1994); the World Summit for Social Development (1995). He worked previously at other Egyptian diplomatic missions in New Delhi, India; Brussels, Belgium and Egypt's mission to the European Union.

Prominent Egyptians in Denmark



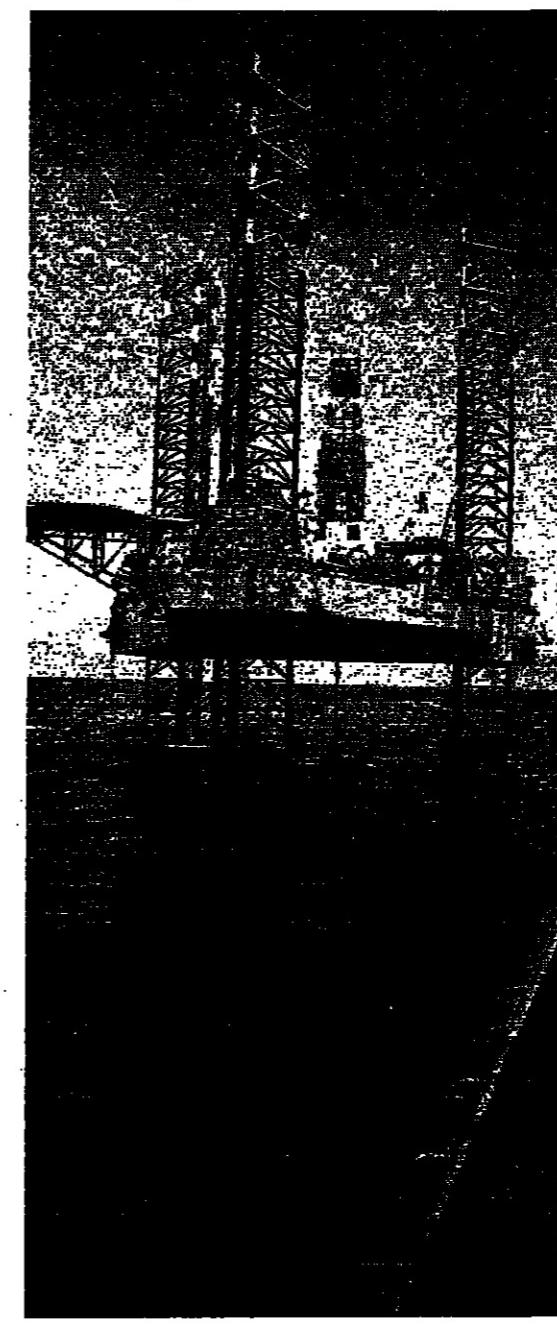
Ahmed Asim
BA in commerce, 1967.
Worked in the Ministry of Economy before emigrating to Denmark in 1969 where he worked in hotels. Currently manager of Army Import-Export Co.



Tarek Rifaat
BA in commerce, 1968. Emigrated to Denmark 1978. Played for Al-Ahli Club and Team Egypt in handball. Worked in hotels in Denmark. Currently works as manager of EgyptAir in Copenhagen.



Magdi El-Husseini
Emigrated from Egypt in 1973 to study hotel management in Denmark. Worked for Sheraton in Denmark, Egypt, Riyadh and Luxor. Presently works as manager in one of the largest restaurants and banquet halls in Copenhagen, Langlina Castle, on the North Sea.

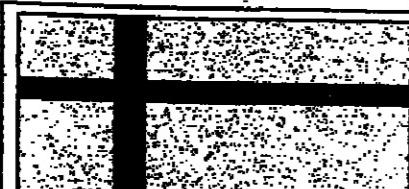


Maersk Drilling is an international drilling contractor, which together with its affiliate Egyptian Drilling Company in Cairo operates over 35 drilling units worldwide – in the North Sea, in the Red Sea, in the Far East, in the Middle East and in South America – day and night. In order to secure future supply of energy.

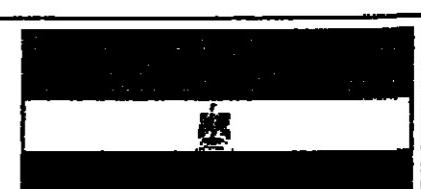
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Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



Egyptian ambassador to Sweden:

Sweden's National Day is a remembrance of Sweden's stabilising role

As Sweden comes to celebrate its National Day, we remember the positive and constructive contributions Sweden gave to boost international cooperation in order to secure peace. Sweden's name is therefore connected to international cooperation, particularly through the UN and its subordinate organisations. In this field, Sweden accumulated expertise, especially in troubleshooting, diffusing tension and managing crises. Sweden is also at the vanguard of aid-providing countries.

At the top of priorities for Sweden comes the establishment of democracy in countries of the world and assisting them in transforming their economies to the market economy system.

Conservation of the environment is of special interest to the government of Sweden which is also concerned with encouraging dialogue among different re-

gions and cultures to the end of bolstering ties among peoples of all races and religions in the same country and among all countries as well.

In spite of Sweden's multifaceted cooperation policy, re-

mains at the very top of Sweden's concerns. To this end, Sweden assumed a key role since it joined the EU. It took part in the Barcelona conference and also sought to formulate greater EU-Mediterranean cooperation.

When we mention the bilateral Egyptian-Swedish ties, it is worth noting that there are many opportunities for further growth particularly in the field of tourism. In this regard, Egypt has got all of the potential for a tourism boom with all its tourist attractions nationwide. Private ventures can benefit from the increasing commercial exchange which will finally add to the growth of Egyptian-Swedish ties.

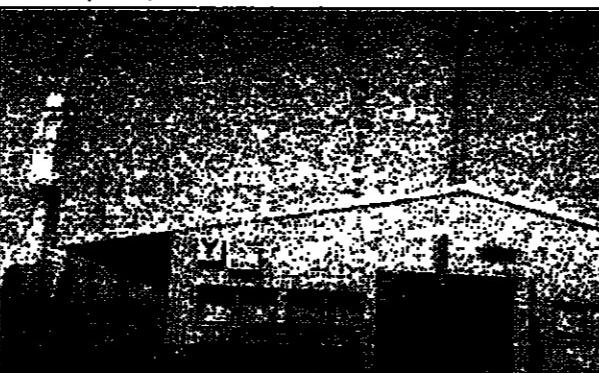
Hamdi Nada
Egyptian ambassador to Sweden



H.E. King Carl Gustav of Sweden and his wife Queen Sylvia
Sweden celebrates its National Day in June each year. Egypt is strengthening its ties with Sweden, which considered one of the most important countries of northern Europe and one of the Scandinavian countries with which Egypt has strong political ties, represented by Sweden's support for Arab rights in all fields. Likewise, Sweden is linked economically to Egypt, represented in its support of Egyptian industry and the national economy. On the occasion of publishing this special supplement, Al-Ahram would like to thank the Egyptian ambassador in Stockholm, Hamdi Nada, and Egyptian trade minister in Stockholm, Ahmed El-Guweili and the Egyptian expatriate community for their assistance in publishing this supplement.

Stockholm: Mohamed Seif El-Yazal

Expatriate's success sets an example



The company's headquarters in Malmö, Sweden

Eng. Qadri El-Naggar

Arab-Sweden International AB, based in Malmö on the outskirts of Copenhagen, is becoming a bridge between Egypt and Sweden. It offers great opportunity to get acquainted with what both the Egyptian and Swedish markets need and produce.

More than 80 Egyptian businessmen paid regular business visits to Arab-Sweden International AB. The result was an export deal for 28 shipments.

Moreover, 5 major Swedish companies gained access to the Egyptian market where they launched investment projects. Skanska is one such company, currently constructing a giant bridge that connects Sweden to Denmark.

Skanska and Masonit are among the best-known producers of top quality brands. Arab-Sweden International AB acts as a consultant for both companies in Egypt. By virtue of this link with worldwide manufacturers in various areas, Arab-Sweden International AB introduced advanced production lines for beef, different capacity refrigerators, engines, furniture-manufacturing equipment, a hospital and 2 shoe factories. The company also signed a contract to establish one of the largest carbonated water factories, as well as a diaper factory in Egypt.

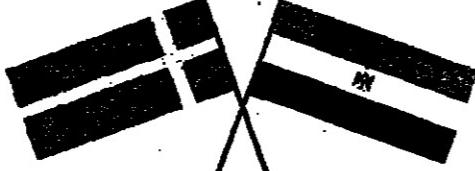
Together with the Egyptian government, the company is considering opening a new branch in a free zone which will help further aid in assisting interested clients.

The company takes the occasion of this supplement to shed light on the efforts exerted by both the Egyptian ambassador to Sweden, Hamdi Nada, and his Swedish counterpart, Jan Stihl, to enhance Egyptian-Swedish ties.

The company extends its best wishes for the new ambassadors, Mohamed Samih Darar and Kristen Selven.

Qadri El-Naggar, chairman of the company, said that the success of the economic reform programme is what attracted investors and giant companies such as Skanska to invest in the Egyptian market.

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Eng Zadri El Naggar

Close cooperation between Egypt and Sweden

I wish to thank Al-Ahram for giving this opportunity to address its readers on the occasion of the Swedish National Day.

The 6 of June has been chosen to be the National Day for several reasons. On 6 June 1523, Gustav Vasa was proclaimed King of Sweden. On the same date 1809 a new Swedish constitution was proclaimed. The 6 of June has also been celebrated for many years in Sweden as the day of the Swedish Flag.

With an area of 450,000km², Sweden is one of the largest countries in Europe. In Sweden nearly 100,000 lakes are connected in a network of waterways, and many large rivers flow from the northwestern mountains through the forests to the sea. A long coastline also contributes to the character of the country — Sweden is located between the Baltic and the North Sea. There are thousands of islands along the jagged coast.

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy, with a parliamentary form of government. The king, since 1973, Carl XVI Gustav, has only ceremonial functions as head of state. Parliament (the Riksdag) consists of one Chamber, whose members are directly elected for simultaneous four-year terms and according to a proportional representation system. Sweden has had universal suffrage since 1921 and the voting age is 18.

The Arabic Republic of Egypt and Sweden are situated rather far from each other geographically and our two peoples have different experiences and traditions. In spite of that there have been lively contacts over the years between our two countries. Egypt and Sweden have deep and excellent long-standing bilateral relations with each other. We have a close cooperation in the United Nations and in other International fora and over the years we have had long-standing and close cooperation also in the cultural field, where I could mention, as an example, the salvage of the Abu Simbel Temple, an operation planned by a Swedish firm. A very well-known personality in Cairo for many decades was the Swedish professor at Cairo University Vivi Täckholm, who has played a great role for the cultural relations between our two countries.

Sweden and Egypt have also long-standing trade relations. Swedish export to Egypt in 1995 according to Swedish statistics, amounted to 1869m Swedish crowns (LE945mn). Compared to 1994, this represents an increase in current prices by 32 per cent.

Egyptian exports to Sweden are also grow-

ing. According to our statistics, it went up from SEK624m to SEK775m, an increase by 24 per cent.

I am optimistic about the future development of the trade relations between Egypt and Sweden. The potential of our bilateral trade is quite promising. Transportation, telecommunications, chemical products, packaging technology, energy conservation and environmental protection, etc., constitute vital areas for business cooperation. Industrial automation is another area where Swedish industry developed a high degree of sophistication.

In this connection, it should be mentioned that the number of Swedish tourists to Egypt has increased during 1995 by almost 20 per cent, which has given more Swedes an opportunity to acquaint themselves with this fascinating country.

Swedish bilateral development assistance to Egypt has mainly taken the form of technical assistance, various feasibility studies and, above all, training. Sweden also participated with a contribution of SEK60mn to the establishment of the Social Fund for Development. The activities in the field of training have often been tailor-made to suit the needs of various organisations and authorities. Furthermore, Egyptians have also been given scholarships and grants in order to participate in international training courses arranged in Sweden.

On 1 January 1995, Sweden became a member of the European Union. With Finland and Austria joining on the same date, the EU expanded from 12 to 15 member countries. EU membership has been the dominant political issue in Sweden so far during the 1990s. Sweden's agreement with the EU is one of the most important treaties the country has signed during the 20th century. Sweden, now as a new member of the EU, attaches great importance to the Mediterranean region. We are active participants in the efforts to expand the cooperation through the strategy of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. The ongoing Barcelona process constitutes an important political process that Sweden very much welcomes.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to convey to the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt through Al-Ahram my best wishes and at the same time my thanks to all those who contribute to a close friendship, better understanding and extended cooperation between Egypt and Sweden.



SWEDISH WOOD TIMBER EXPORT

(Sayed El Nawawi)

congratulates the
Swedish government
and people on the
National Day of Sweden

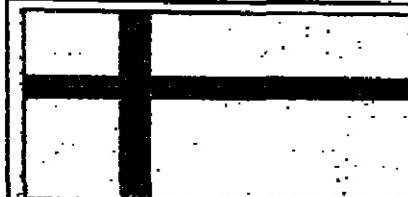
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Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day



Largest chemical factory in Upper Egypt

hebi
health care



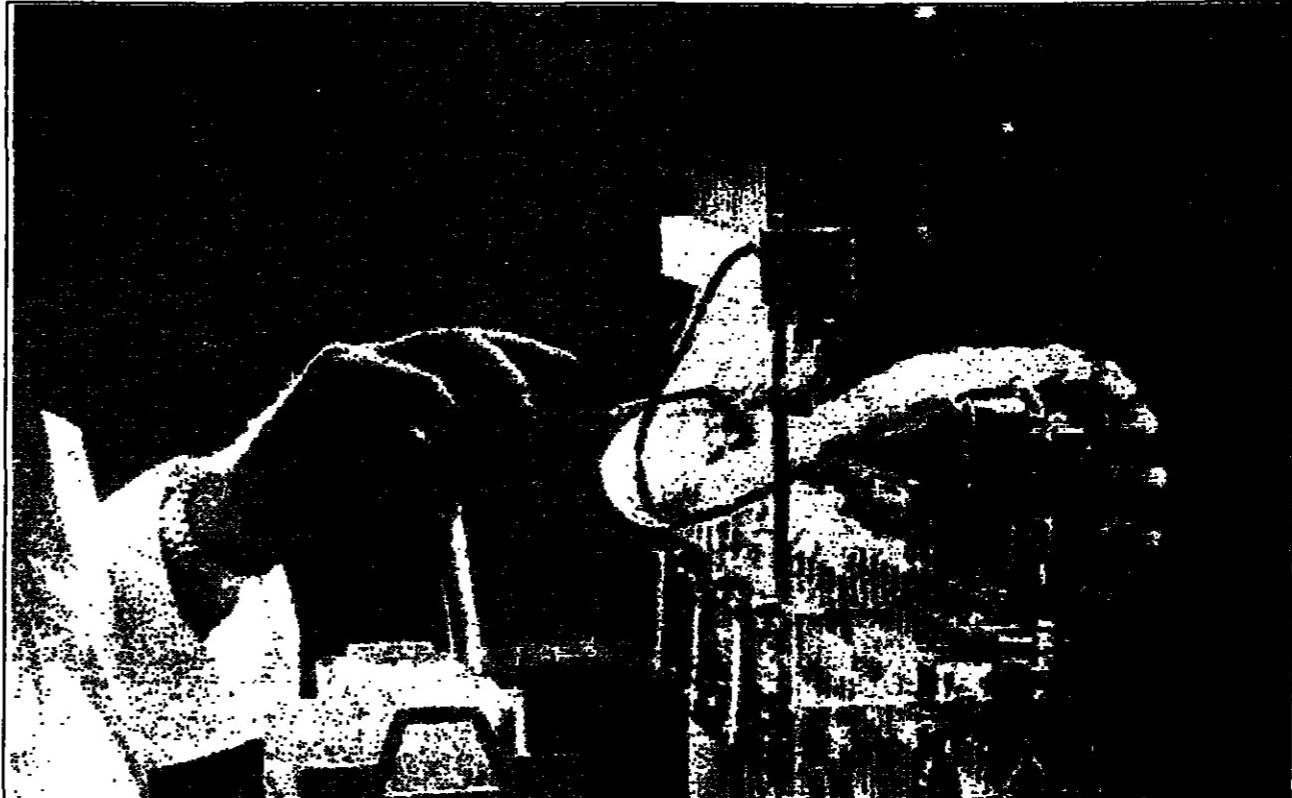
Rifaat El-Sayed, Egyptian businessman



Ibrahim Fawzi (left) talks to Swedish economist of Egyptian origin Rifaat El-Sayed. In centre is Salwa Eid



Some of the sanitary products made from viscose fibre



Research and development of materials

A perfect example of close Swedish-Egyptian cooperation

It is known that the soaring prices of basic chemicals can be attributed to the technical know-how invested in this industry as well as the costs of advanced equipment used to develop these products. To balance these costs, Egypt seemed a natural choice for Hebi Health Care to establish one of the largest chemical factories in Upper Egypt.

But why Egypt in particular? A feasibility study was carried out, the results of which indicated 3 good reasons:

- The encouraging atmosphere for investment which provides investors with facilities is unprecedented.

- The low cost of power

required for the production of chemicals.

The cost of power nears 50 per cent of the production cost.

— The great potential for using by-products of this industry in agriculture. The by-products are met with great demand, particularly in Egypt.

This is in addition to the traditional factors that contribute to the success of any project, such as Egypt's strategic geographic location and the low cost of manpower.

Aims of the project:

- To construct an industrial base that will develop the materials required for operating pharmaceutical

factories.

— Producing a fair share of products for export. Hebi Care has many agents worldwide, including Sweden.

— Having a research centre operating at international standards in Egypt. This will help guarantee the protection of patent rights.

Osama Abbas, one of the representatives of the company in Egypt, stated that the latter goal was the reason for the speedy cooperation on the part of all government officials to give approval to the project.

Salwa Eid, one of the company's consultants in Egypt, added that preliminary discussions and consultations with Ismail Sallam, Egyptian health minister, and Gamila

Moussa, under-secretary to the minister, highlighted that the project is of necessity to the local market, which will benefit from the company's products.

It is expected that local components used in the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals will increase to 50 per cent.

As part of its strategy, Hebi Health Care Group acquired the ownership of some companies already operating, and is venturing into joint investments.

The basic principle remains, however, to acquire patent rights of newly-introduced projects.

Hebi Health Care specialises in the area of producing viscose fibres. The company

owns the Nyesfinska factory, an acquisition which gave Hebi Health Care 15 per cent total viscose fibre production in Europe in 1994. 85-95 per cent of its products are directed towards Western Europe.

Hebi Health Care also chose to specialise in the area of producing herbal medicines. The largest herbal medicine factory in Sweden is Novasan which serves as a production plant for its other clients and is entirely owned by Hebi Health Care.

Hebi Health care also owns the Swedlife Co., which operates in the same field.

The company's products are in high demand from health care institutions, hos-

pitals and pharmacies. The company selected Hossam Omar to be the agent of Swedlife Co. in Egypt and the Middle East. Four items produced by Swedlife are being marketed in Egypt:

- Swed Active Man: This gives men over 30 years of age extra energy, and enhances their immune systems.

- The Swed Active Woman: For women over 30 years of age, this product adds vitality to the overall performance of their bodies.

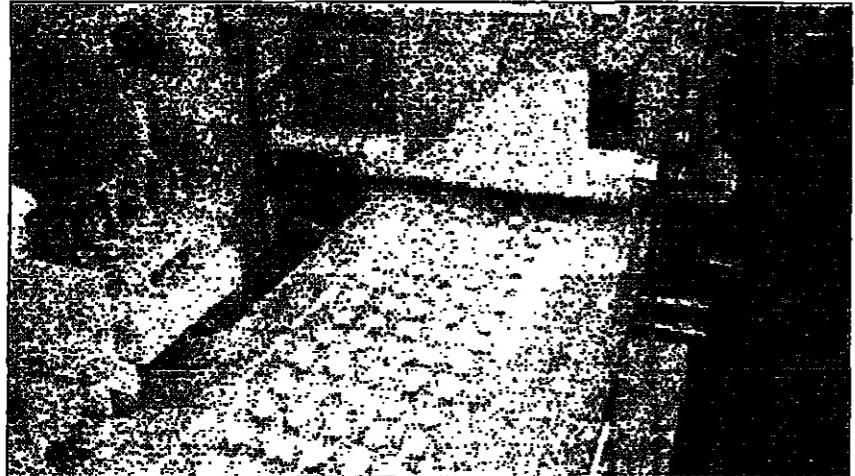
- Swed Mint: To alleviate flu symptoms.

- Swed Climatic: A preparation designed to relieve fatigue and produce energy. Carefully prepared and safe to use.

Agents required in Arab countries

Contact: Hebi Health Care AB Tel: 46-8-21 41 15 Fax: 46-8-21 41 90 Regeringsgatan 20, S-111 53 Stockholm, Sweden. Board of directors located in Stockholm.

Representative in Cairo: Orkidia Co, 180 Road 9, Maadi. Tel: 351-3936 Fax: 378-6747



Preparing and packaging pharmaceuticals



Quality control is one of the company's highest priorities



The Swedlife product line

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Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day

**Marosef Import and Export:
Earned trust from timber
importers in Egypt and
North Africa**

Imports of Swedish timber from Marosef are known for their excellent quality and reputation among importers. The company continues to open new markets to import its products, gaining the confidence and trust of importers. Among these new markets is Tunisia, which imports 2500m³ through Sogebois Co., one of the largest timber importers in Tunisia.



Mohamed Rashad

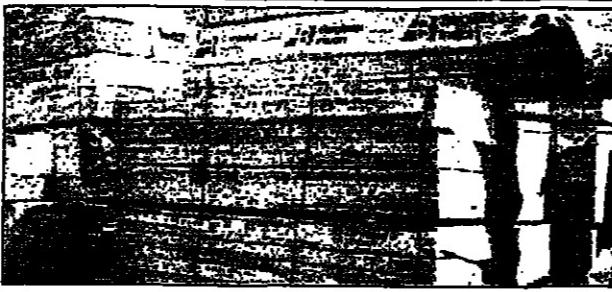
Casablanca.

The Egyptian market, however, is one of the largest international markets which imports timber from Scandinavia. The company has earned its trust from many of the largest timber importers in Egypt, among them Wahba and Sons, Sons of Mursi Nureddine, Hill's Sons, El-Bayli Co., Mido, the Alexandrian Company for Imports and

Cairo Co. To all of the companies dealing and working with Marosef Import and Export, the company extends its thanks and gratitude.

Another Tunisian company which imports wood directly from Marosef is Somaf in Sfax.

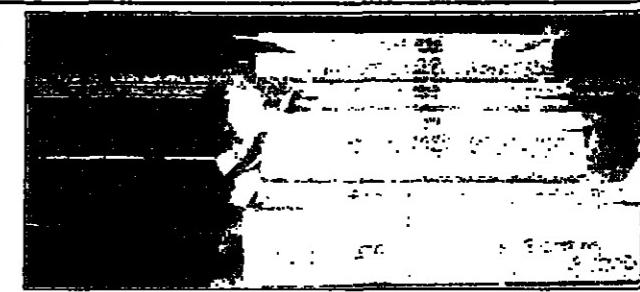
As for the Moroccan market, the company has sent imports to Ocid Bois at



Timber exports to Sons of Hilal in Alexandria



Said El-Arabi, owner of Ocid Bois at Casablanca, Morocco; Mohamed Ibrahim Rashad and Sture Petersson, owner of TIE in Sweden



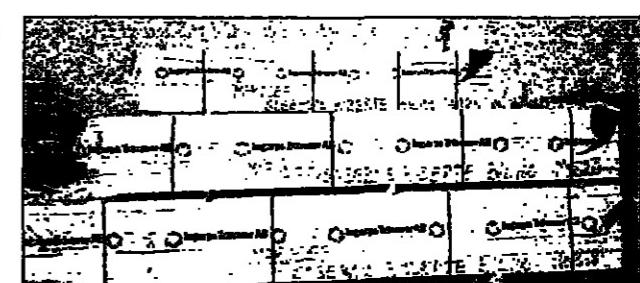
A shipment of timber to Sogebois Co. in Tunisia



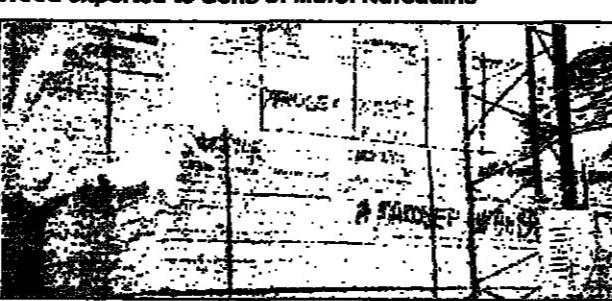
Wood exported to Sons of Mursi Nureddine



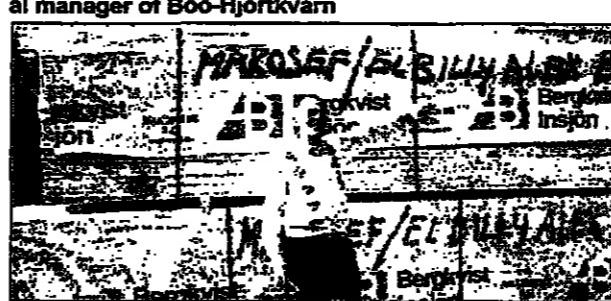
Said El-Arabi, Mohamed Ibrahim Rashad and the general manager of Boo-Hjortkvarn



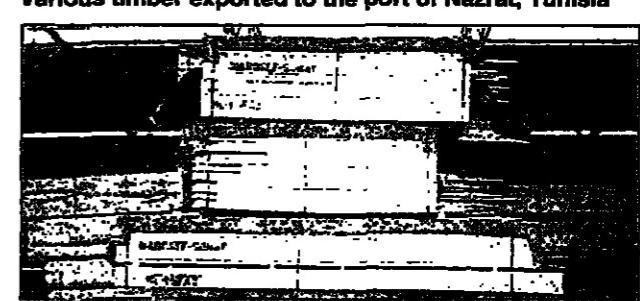
Various timber exported to the port of Nazrat, Tunisia



Timber exported to Wahba Co. in Alexandria



Ibrahim Hosni, general manager of El-Bayli Co in Alexandria



A shipment of timber exported to Somaf Co. in Sfax, Tunisia

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Mohammed Ibrahim Rashad



Karl Gustav
King of Sweden



Hosni Mubarak
President of Egypt



Zein Al Abdin Bin Ali
President of Tunisia



Al Hassan Al Thani
King of Morocco

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keeps on
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success in the
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Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day

A talk about tourism, youth, and sports with Egypt's Yehia Misbah, a distinguished businessman in Sweden



Yehia Misbah with former Swedish Prime Minister Ingmar Carlson and international track and field champion Abdel-Moneim Wahba

During my visit to the Swedish capital Stockholm, I was trying to look for distinguished Egyptian people, when I heard the name Yehia Misbah from too many people including the Egyptian ambassador in Sweden and other members of the Egyptian community. Being familiar with Egyptian sports champions, Yehia Misbah rang a bell in my head, and I remembered Egypt's table-tennis champion and captain of Ahli team. Misbah was also a star player at Ain Shams University, and he is an honourable member of the Egyptian Handball Federation. But, in Sweden, he is known to be one of the best Egyptian businessmen in Strömstad, south of Sweden near its border with Norway.

The six hundred kilometers between me in Stockholm and Misbah in the South did not hinder my desire to meet him. In one of the most beautiful resorts in Sweden, I made this interview with him.

When did you start your career and what did you do?

I graduated from Ain Shams University, Faculty of Letters in 1976. I completed my MA in table-tennis training in Sweden in 1971. From 1967 to 1971, I coached the Libyan national table-tennis team. From 1981 to 1986, I traded in electronic appliances in

Sweden. From 1986 to 1996, I started also exporting timber.

What about your marital status?

I'm married to Salma Mabrouk, daughter of the international track and field player Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Mabrouk. All the success I have achieved, I owe to my wife who helped me run my business as efficiently as she runs my house. She is a typical Egyptian wife in her sincerity. I have two daughters, Mona and Noha, both in secondary school.

Being a former Egyptian champion, what do you think of sports in Egypt now?

I was with Abdel-Moneim Wahba during the last World Track and Field Championship in Sweden, and I saw the Egyptian team's excellent organisation. Sweden has star athletes in many sports like tennis, football, swimming and winter sports. Nevertheless, it would not be fair to compare between sports in Egypt and sports in Sweden, although the Swedish were impressed with the Egyptian organisation during the fifth All Africa Games headed by president of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Abdel-Moneim Emaara.

I would like to praise here the role Abdel-Moneim Wahba played as former president of the Sports Body and his services to SCYS. As you know, Egypt is making a breakthrough in sports. I should also mention the leading position the Egyptian handball team took in the recent World Championships and the achievements of other teams in different sports with the current Sports Body President Hanafi Abu Taleb's efforts to achieve more.

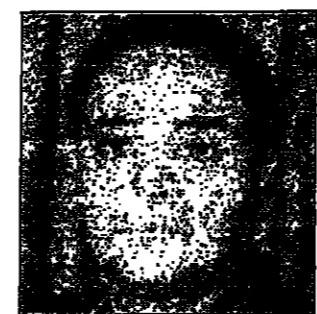
What is the potential of cooperation between Egypt and the Scandinavian countries?

As you know, Scandinavian people make the best tourists in the world; their long winter and very cold weather drive them out to warmer countries to meet peoples of different cultures. Egypt's diverse culture however, and its warm weather and sandy beaches, are not enough to attract Scandinavian tourists.

Tourism is a trade like any other trade where the quality of services affects the rate of tourists. Suitable publicity and good hotel and transportation services will certainly increase the rate of tourists to our country.

I couldn't help noticing the orderliness of the traffic in Sweden. How is that when there are no officers in the streets?

That is an important question. With all due respect for traffic officers in Egypt, I think the main reason Egypt



has traffic problems is lack of awareness and sometimes the disrespect some people have for street signs.

As for the Swedish people, either drivers or pedestrians, they all have the awareness that makes them respect the signs without the need for officers on the roads.

What is the best news you received lately?

Without any exaggeration, out of love for my country and the democratic policy in use now, I say that the best news was the safety of President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia after the attempted assassination attempt against him. That is not my opinion alone, but of the entire Egyptian community here. The worst news we had was the death of Alaa Mabrouk, my brother-in-law, and former world track and field champion.

What are your hopes in the near future?

Frankly, I would like to meet President Hosni Mubarak to convey to him the love, and admiration that the Egyptian community here in Sweden feel for him.

Do you have a word of advice to give to Egyptians who want to travel or emigrate?

I advise them to hold on to their religion, and not to believe the bad rumors that sometimes spread about Egypt.

That is an important question. With all due respect for traffic officers in Egypt, I think the main reason Egypt

Allahu Akbar! over the airwaves of Stockholm

Every Friday afternoon over the airwaves of Stockholm comes the call to prayer, Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar... from Holy Qur'an Radio in Stockholm, the first — and only — Islamic broadcast to air in Scandinavia. The man behind the call to prayer is Swedish man of Egyptian origin, Wagdi El-Gadawi.

El-Gadawi explained: "In 1990 we were able to secure the necessary funds and licensing to begin broadcasting. The aim of the broadcast is directed at Muslims living in Sweden, whose numbers have reached more than 300 thousand in all parts of the country. This broadcast serves to strengthen ties among the country's Muslims, especially those who are living outside the Islamic world."

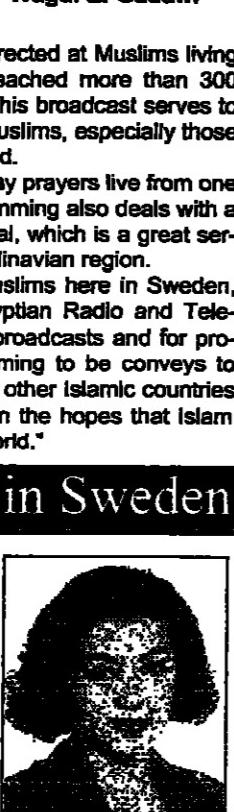
"Holy Qur'an Radio broadcasts Friday prayers live from one of the mosques in Stockholm. Programming also deals with a variety of religious educational material, which is a great service in propagating Islam to the Scandinavian region."

"On behalf of myself and of the Muslims here in Sweden, we express our gratitude to the Egyptian Radio and Television Union for their support of our broadcasts and for providing us with material and programming to be conveyed to the Muslims of Sweden. We hope that other Islamic countries will offer their support in the hopes that Islam will spread further in this part of the world."

Egyptian success in Sweden

Reham Ahmed El-Guweili is a student at the German Secondary School in Stockholm, where she has proven herself in science, maths and sociology. For the past two years she has been chosen to represent the school on a number of important occasions and events — the first time a non-German or non-Swedish student has been chosen for such representation.

El-Guweili ranked at the top of her class, and she is currently preparing to attend university.



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Egyptian exports to Sweden continue to rise

The volume of foreign commerce to Sweden reached SKR869bn in 1994 (\$471.65mn), rising to SKR1025 in 1995 (with SKR567 in exports equalling \$77mn), meaning that the Swedish commercial balance realises a commercial surplus year after year.

As for the Swedish economy in general, in 1995 it realised a growth in its Gross National Product by 3 per cent, which is considered the highest percentage Sweden has realised since 1978 until now.

The increase in commercial and economic ties between Sweden and Egypt continues to bring the two countries closer together year after year, especially with the establishment of the Egyptian-Swedish Cooperative Committee for Economic, Commercial and Technical Development in 1975. Representatives from both countries have met 6 times since its founding, the

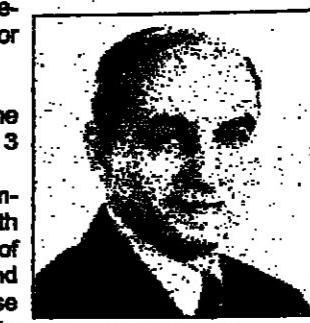
last meeting which was held in Stockholm in 1994. Businessmen from both Egypt and Sweden have also been brought closer together by a cooperative council which has convened 3 times until now, the last meeting having been held in Stockholm in 1994.

In the area of economic and technical cooperation between the two countries, Sweden has furnished Egypt with easy-term loans to finance 7 projects with a value of SKR42.5m involving electricity, desalination and housing. Likewise, via the Swedish Investment and Technical Assistance Organisation (BITS), Egypt has been given financing for 9 consultancy projects, with costs reaching SKR116.6mn, in the areas of power, industry, agriculture, managerial development, environmental protection, telecommunications, health and education.

Sweden has also offered

training programmes to 403 Egyptian trainees through BITS, at a cost of SKR26mn. The Swedish Fund for Industrial Development for Developing Countries shared in the capitals of 3 Egyptian-Swedish companies with an amount of SKR5mn, and it likewise contributed to the capitals of 9 investment projects in Egypt with an amount of LE28mn.

In the area of commercial exchange, the value of Egyptian exports continues to increase year after year. The value of Egyptian Exports reached SKR376.3mn (\$52.3mn) in 1994, which took the form of industrial and mineral exports. Sweden is one of the most promising countries in Scandinavia for receiving Egyptian exports, such as ready-made clothing (like medical, military and industrial uniforms), which have become exempt from customs duties after Sweden's inclusion in the European Union, in addition to produce and chemicals.



Ahmed El-Guweili

Role of tourism offices in Stockholm

Samia Abdel-Magid, head of the Egyptian Tourism Office in Stockholm, said that the office built after a decision from the Egyptian Tourism Authority which wanted to take an active role in promoting tourism to increase the number of tourists from Scandinavian countries and Finland to Egypt. Egypt is considered an important tourist destination for travellers from these countries, especially in the winter, when Egypt's sunshine comes in contrast to the cold gloomy weather that falls upon these countries in October to April.

The Egyptian Tourism Office is dedicated to the following activities:

1. Placing advertisements in important Scandinavian newspapers and magazines within the range of the office's budget.

2. Participating in tourism expositions which take place in these countries. Having a major wing in a tourist exposition is a sure way to promote tourism and attract tourists.

3. Issuing publications from time to time containing the latest information on tourism in Egypt. These are distributed to travel agencies throughout the region.

4. Organising information trips for leading media representatives and personalities as the office's guests. Promotion in this manner goes a long way in attracting other people to visit Egypt.

5. Maintaining connections with other tourism offices in these countries, too inform them of what Egypt has to offer in the way of tourism programmes.

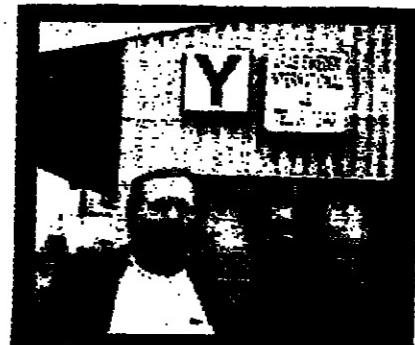
6. Holding tourism seminars in universities and institutes, showing promotional films on Egypt.

7. Publishing an annual report on the office's activities in these different markets. These reports are important sources for facts and figures which are used in promotional materials.



Samia Abdel-Magid

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- ⇒ Light cement production lines
- ⇒ Used packaging factories

The company extends its thanks to Dr. Mohammed Saifat El Husseini at the Egyptian Tourist Authority, Dr. Adel El Zaki in Alexandria and Dr. Normar Milad for the embracing reception the Co. was given in Egypt.

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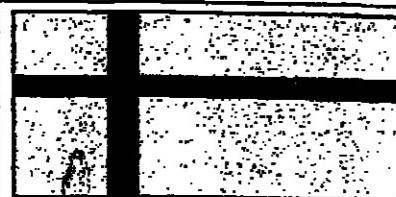
Chairman of the Board

Yehia Mesbah

دعاكم على مصر

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Alfa L



Special supplement on Sweden to celebrate its National Day

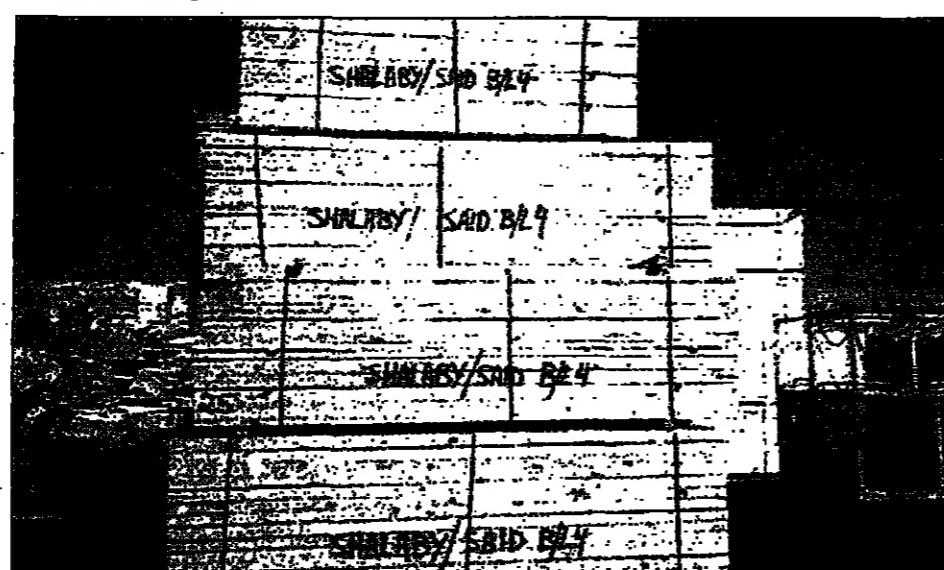
Egyptian expatriates: from rags to riches



Trucks transporting timber to the port



Hamdi Shalabi oversees the loads of timber brought to Swedish ports



A shipment awaiting to be loaded onto the ship

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Stockholm

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Fax:
468 702-1293
Tel (priv):
468 647-9945
Mobile:
070 576-2916

Renowned merchant Hamdi Shalabi is a self-made man. He runs a flourishing business in Sweden, has a high reputation and has gained the confidence of all businessmen there.

Shalabi was a boxer when he was 16 years old. He joined the Faculty of Science at Al-Azhar University. During his summer vacation, he travelled to Copenhagen. This was in the 70s, and it was a trip that changed the course of his life. He continued his academic life in Sweden.

As for his career life, he started from scratch. With re-

lentless determination, he entered the field of import/export. Shalabi, now 47 years old, said that when he left Egypt he held on to his principles which made it easier for him to overcome his obstacles. Honesty and adaptability, in addition to his unshakable belief in commitment, were the keys. When he arrived in Sweden in 1971, he worked in a university hospital in Stockholm, where he proved to be efficient. He gained a student work permit that was approved by the Ministry of Labour and the Swedish police. Shalabi realised that his ambition could not be achieved without

learning Swedish, so he divided his time between learning Swedish and work. He studied chemistry, then commerce in the Faculty of Trade at the University of Sweden. Ending his studies in 1981, he worked as an accountant in many cities. Afterwards, he worked in the brokerage field, before opening a private office. After the fall of stock prices in the 80s, he opened a small coffee shop in Stockholm. He became a coffee and tea importer from countries such as Kenya, Brazil, India and Sri Lanka. Today he is one of the largest importers of 225 kinds of tea in all flavours.

Shalabi was one of 9 brothers and sisters to whom he devoted his utmost care. He brought 4 of them to Sweden; two of whom became doctors. His sisters married Egyptian businessmen in Sweden. His brother established a timber export company, but later died in an accident in Stockholm. To honour his brother's memory, Shalabi continues to run his company, currently under expansion. It invests SKR20mn and manufactures 200 thousand m³ of timber. Shalabi owns the Himalaya Co. that imports tea and coffee. Its holdings are worth SKR10mn.

Hamdi Shalabi with the owner of Knorr Shipping in Sweden

Shalabi Timber Export Co. extends its thanks to the timber merchants for placing their trust in the company. The company congratulates the King and the people of Sweden on the occasion of their National Day.

Egyptian diplomats in Stockholm

Sherif Saad Allah
Undersecretary at the embassy
Diploma and MA in accounting from
Duke University, United States of
America, 1988
Joined the foreign service in 1989.
Member of the Diplomat's Association
in Stockholm.



Ahmed Hassan Darwish
Commissioner at the embassy and
supervisor of the consular section
Licence in literature, Cairo University, 1979
Joined the foreign service 1990.
Worked in the Eastern European Affairs Section, the office of the foreign minister, and was part of the Egyptian mission to the United Nations.



The Egyptian community in Sweden

Nearly 3,000 Egyptians in Sweden work as doctors, engineers, etc. in different fields and sectors.

Most of them have Swedish nationality and enjoy full benefits from it, such as social security and health care benefits.

One of the biggest problems facing the Egyptian community in Sweden deals with their legal status.

Egyptians in the process of acquiring Swedish nationality must obtain permission from the Egyptian Embassy to do so.

A large number take an active part in Swedish politics and join political parties.

Alfa Laval Agri-Egypt

Alfa Laval Agri-Egypt been marketing Swedish dairy production equipment of the highest quality within all parts of Egypt for some time, and has recently witnessed an increased demand for its milking equipment and spare parts, which follow the highest standards of quality.

The company has a branch in Minya to serve Upper Egypt, in addition to a fleet of service cars which are ready to deliver and install spare parts to farms across the country, bringing the newest and latest in equipment for milk production.

In its role as one of company's branches around the world, Alfa Laval Agri-Egypt works for the sake of improving milk production by providing the necessary means to do under the supervision and guidance of specially-trained engineers working in this field.

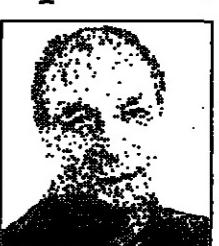
Success in Sweden



International cello player Nagi El-Habashi

Struggling from war to peace: El-Suwidiya for Timber Export

Said El-Nawawi is a former member of Egypt's armed forces who fought in the October 1973 War. He continued his military career until 1990, when he emigrated to Sweden, and began his peaceful struggle, working in the field of contracting, until he moved to the field of timber export, where he found great success. Making use of the discipline he learned from his military training, El-Nawawi established El-Suwidiya for Timber Export, providing the Egyptian and Arab market with their needs in timber.



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The philosophy of Swedish education

Sweden has a population of almost nine million people. About 2 million Swedes are children or teenagers under the ages of 18. All of them go to school. Primary and preparatory schooling is compulsory in Sweden. Teaching methods depend on the age and performance of the child. The early ages of the children's education is a period of character building. The children's personalities are propped up and the principles that will guide the children as they grow up and develop are inculcated early. The educational system in Sweden is also designed to develop the children's personality to the full. It is designed to make them yearn for knowledge and develop an inquisitive personality. The children are encouraged to develop a sociable personality and to excel at sports and develop physically.

The early years are one in which the children learn to speak and express themselves verbally, in writing and by drawing. They are also encouraged to write

stories and to speak in public. They are encouraged to be brave and confident. There is no room for shyness or the fear of facing people. The children learn to be articulate. Teachers encourage children to respect one another, to tolerate different opinions and to learn from their mistakes. They learn to love education and knowledge. There are numerous classes in the early stages of education where the children's many questions are answered. This period between the first and the fifth grade is called the "light teaching phase". It becomes increasingly more complex as the children grow older. The scope of the studies are also deepened.

The most important objective of the education system in Sweden, apart from the scientific dimension, is to give them a chance to be creative from the earliest age possible. The children learn to develop sport skills, musical talent, painting, acting, home economics, sewing, carpentry, and other such skills which develop assisted by the state.

the children's intellect. For example at the end of the mid-academic year, in December to be precise, a play is staged where all pupils of the class take part. There is no difference between rich and poor, intelligent and slow children — everyone takes part in the play without exception. At the end of the academic year, a similar play is staged where the whole school participates. Group singing is encouraged. About 55 per cent of Swedish schools have swimming classes. But in the new educational plan all schools are to provide compulsory swimming lessons.

But the schools alone do not develop the child's potential. There are special clubs for youngsters. With inexpensive fees all children attend these clubs. There are sporting clubs, which give all children a chance to learn new sports and develop sports skills regardless of the social background or class that they come from. There are music clubs, dancing clubs, and private clubs sponsored and

As for scientific learning in Sweden, it is almost always accompanied by practical experiments in laboratories that make sure that the experiments are impressed on the children's memory. About 95 per cent of these experiments entail visits to cultural centres and seminars where the children are allowed to ask questions.

For example when children start to learn about politics or to study political science they are encouraged to visit the Swedish Parliament and to attend the different parliamentary sessions. They are also encouraged to meet with parliamentarians from the various political parties. The children are encouraged to love, enjoy and appreciate politics. The children are encouraged to learn what is happening in the country and to freely discuss the hottest political topics of the day. They are also encouraged to learn about international issues

and to read Swedish and international papers. They learn at an early stage in their educational career that we live in one world.

They also learn history lessons by visiting the various museums. They go on field trips to the relevant museums accompanied by guides and see for themselves how the people in the various historical settings lived. From the practical experiences they augment their learning from books. This happens in all other academic subjects whether in the form of scientific experiments in laboratories or in museums.

The Ministry of Culture also plays an important role in staging plays of some of the novels and stories that the students learn at school. These plays are performed around the country in the different provinces so that no student is denied the chance to view these plays.



